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THE KINGDOM COMETH

by

JOSEPH RICHARD SIZOO, D.D.

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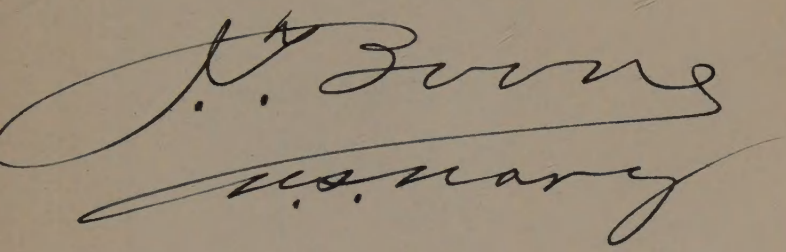

THE KINGDOM COMETH

Some Aspects of the Religion of Jesus

by

JOSEPH RICHARD SIZOO, D.D.

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Dedication

To the Imperishable Memory

of

MY FATHER

Whose Noble Life of
Unfaltering Faith in an Unfailing
God Has Been My Example

and

MY MOTHER

Whose Beautiful Life of
Unbroken Prayer and
Goodness Has Kept Me
in the Love of God.

Religion Methodist World Service Fund Transferred

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CONTENTS

	Page
I. The Unveiling of the Kingdom	1
II. The Gateway to the Kingdom	23
III. Values in the Kingdom	39
IV. The Culture of the Kingdom	63
V. The Gospel of the Kingdom	81
VI. The Vindication of the Kingdom	105
VII. The Danger to the Kingdom	123
VIII. The Presence in the Kingdom	143
IX. The Romance of the Kingdom	161

FOREWORD

HAVE been prompted by those who have heard me speak on some aspects of the Kingdom that Cometh, to present them in a book, that new hope and heart may come to those who share with me the glorious venture of Christian discipleship.

Washington, D. C.
November, 1930.

I

THE UNVEILING

of

THE KINGDOM

THE UNVEILING OF THE KINGDOM

JOHN 4:29—*"Come, see a man—is not this the Christ?"*

THE MINISTRY of Jesus according to John, began, not with a vast congregation, but with a single individual. It was not set into operation at a definite occasion but rose out of an incidental meeting. It began, not with a socially prominent leader but with an unknown, dishonored individual; not a highly respected person but a tasseled life suffering from a blemished reputation. She was one of those people of whom John Masefield wrote in, "The Widow of Bye Street":

"Each one has been a Jesus mild,
Each one has been a little child,
A little child with laughing look,
A lovely white unwritten book,
A book that God will take, my friend,
As each goes out at the journey's end.
But the book he lent is given back
All blotted full and smutted black."

With such a person the public ministry of Jesus began.

And this ministry of Jesus was a teaching ministry. You will come upon several figures of speech by which He was known to His disciples in the days of his flesh. Sometimes they call Him the Son of Man, and the richness and depth of that title the modern Christian world has not yet fully discovered. Sometimes He was spoken of as a shepherd, and what a shepherd of weary souls He has been, holding in His loving embrace bruised bodies, broken souls, stray lambs. But more often they call Him a teacher. He was a master and they were His disciples. Now it is the teacher that you meet in this episode: a sitting-down with one person thinking through the purpose and meaning of life. He does not lecture; He does not scold; He does not debate with her; He is not critical because of her slowness of mind; He is not impatient with her inability to grasp the meaning and mission of His life. He is a true teacher. He simply met an erring, grown-up, wayward child on her own level. He spoke to her in a language she could understand and grasp. He asked her a few leading questions and drew her out, until

a whole new world opened before her and life was forever painted in new colors.

Jesus took the most unlikely and loveless material. He had but little to work upon in this instance and yet He was not disheartened by that fact. He took a despised tax collector, never a popular man, and made him the writer of the first gospel. He took a cynical skeptic and made Him the preacher of a religion of eternal convictions. He took an intolerant bigot and made him the evangel of a universal gospel of love. He took a fallen woman from the streets of Sychar and made her the first home missionary. And Jesus was never disappointed.

How often have we, teachers of religion, faltered in our duty in this respect? We have thought that the material upon which we had to work was so unlikely and loveless that we lost faith in the enterprise. I was in Stratford one day and saw the desk behind which a restless boy stood by the hour, while the teacher of that school wished for a better assignment because of the unlikely material he had to work upon. Yet all along there stood at his desk before him a boy destined one day to become the great Shakespeare, Bard of Avon. I remember that little church in Scot-

land where a minister of the kirk felt he could do so little for God because the material he had to work with was so inadequate and yet all along as he preached there sat before him a bit of a boy drinking in the words of the minister until one day the boy became a man and was brought back to England the greatest hero of that land in the nineteenth century—David Livingstone. Then too, I remember a simple schoolhouse not far from Pigeon Creek in Indiana where a gaunt, unlikely boy went to school for a few months. The teacher of that frontier school bemoaned his fate and wished for another assignment. Yet the boy who sat before him was destined one day to become a great leader of his country, the kind of a man God gives to the world only once in five hundred years—Abraham Lincoln. But that was not the attitude of Jesus. He had little to work upon yet He was never disappointed in what He had. I commend the reading of this story to all you who are discouraged about your task because of the unlikely equipment you are compelled to work with.

* * * *

It is a marvelous story, simply and artlessly told. For sheer dignity, courage and kindness it

has no parallel in sacred literature. It is perhaps the most authenticated story in the New Testament because it happened at a well which is preserved until the present time. It came to pass that one day at the sixth hour a woman with empty water-pots went to the well. It was an unusual hour and apparently it was chosen with the hope that by going at high noon she might avoid the scurrilous criticism and gossip of the village women. Coming to that well she saw a simple quiet figure who asked her for a drink of water. How life turns on mere incidents! Just a stranger's thirst turned the whole story of her life. And how wonderfully He spoke to her! No poet ever spoke softer words than those which fell from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth as He met this sordid soul at the well of Sychar. There you have the acme of good teaching or as we say today, the psychological approach.

* * * *

But I am not concerned today about Jesus' approach to the woman, but rather about the woman's approach to Jesus. What is so impressive in this incident is the enlarging response of the woman of Sychar to the unveiled glory of Jesus. Step by step she is led to an ever

enlarging unfolding of His power and presence. This incident is really a dialogue in which the woman speaks five times and Jesus makes reply. Now it is singular that each time she speaks to Him she calls Him by a different name. As the conversation is carried along on five occasions she responds, but each time she applies to Jesus a different title. That is very singular and impressive.

First, the woman said, "How is it that thou a Jew"! Can't you see her lips curl with scorn? There is a sneer in her heart and contempt on her face. She calls Him a Jew, a term of hate and contumely. With feminine pertness she rails at Him. There was no love lost between the Jew and Samaritan. Even among the Jews there was a law forbidding them to eat the food of swine or food prepared by a Samaritan. Each cursed the other genuinely and roundly. Seeing Jesus she calls out to Him, "A Jew."

The second title is different. "The woman saith unto Him, 'Sir'." There was something about His bearing and the way He carried Himself that made her feel that she had been unfair. It was not right to call Him Jew. He was not revengeful or angry because of this sneer. He did not try to square the account by tossing off

some discourteous comment about her Samaritan background. There was no resentment in His speech. Then too, there was about Him a purity and grace and kindness so utterly unlike those scarred-souled cynical men she was in the habit of meeting at the well. Realizing she had done Him an injustice, she turned and called Him, "Sir," a gentleman.

Then comes the third unfolding. "The woman saith, 'Thou art a prophet'." They had been speaking together of her home ties. She had frankly admitted to the master that she had no husband because she was the paramour of many. Jesus did not find fault. He did not throw stones at her reputation. He did not sit down to write a sex novel. He did not rush to the Police Department to inquire how they could permit a woman like that to walk the streets. He did not write an editorial for the paper crying out against modern laxity of life. All this moved the woman at the well greatly. Jesus must have been mindful of the eviron-ment in which she lived and the forces against which it was hard for her to stand. Seeing only kindness and forgiveness the woman is deeply moved, knowing he understood. He who threw that terrible ray of light into the unlit gulf of the human heart when he said,

"That which cometh out of a man corrupteth him," had the ear to hear the trembling of one chord that kept in tune with His in the harlot's passionate heart. Moved by His pitying concern she calls Him now, "Prophet"—a man with an understanding heart.

Then comes the fourth and final unfolding. Light breaks upon her darkness. Dawn comes to her wistful soul. The foot-hills are pushed back, and her life is made radiant with a new splendor. Broken chords vibrate anew, and tossing her tasseled past behind her, the woman leaves her water-pots at the well, rushes to the village and calls out to all whom she can make hear, "Come, see a man—is not this the Christ?"

Do you see the unfolding? First a Jew; then a gentleman; then a prophet; then Saviour. First rudeness; then respect; then reverence; then reality. First, contempt; then courtesy; then confidence, and at last communion. First, pertness; then politeness; then power, until at last the unfolding presence. He begins a foe and He ends as a world friend. He begins a figure in time and becomes at last a timeless figure. The Jesus of history becomes the Christ of experience.

Behind the experience of the woman of Sychar lies a profound truth. Her experience

is the law of the ages! As you come close to events, enterprises and personalities, you pass inevitably through these four unfoldings. Movements and men do not fling their full significance at once upon friend or foe. There is always a gradual unfolding of their order and meaning.

Take it in the realm of personality. One day a stranger comes to live near you. He makes his home on the very street on which you live. Who he is, or what he does, or how he lives, is of no concern to you. You are utterly indifferent to him. He is simply one of a thousand and you do not greatly care whether he lives or dies. But as time wears on, each morning and evening he passes the open door of your home and the way he carries himself, his manner and deportment impress you. Unconsciously your indifference turns to respect and courtesy. Then one day you discover he is a writer of books and in the reading of his books you find many things that are true in your own life. When you close his book your attitude to the man is changed and he has become an interpreter and you regard him with reverence and confidence. As the months pass, one night he sits in your home before the open fireplace and together you discuss and think through the meaning and purpose of

life until the friend's beauty of soul so impresses you that you regard him with affection. Indifference passed through respect, and through reverence into reality. Pertness became politeness, then power and then the consciousness of a great presence. What unfolding there is, and what unveiling of life, in the realm of personality!

Take it in our attitude to world good will and fellowship. There are those who approach the peoples of earth with an attitude of scorn. Their lips curl with sneers at the mention of other races and peoples; in their heart there is nothing but hate for them. All this talk of international understanding is to them a mere rattling of dry bones, or empty claptrap. They regard the approaches we make toward the peoples of earth of less worth than scraps of paper. They will tell you that hate has always haunted the world; that suspicion is the incurable disease of humankind; that strife is a biological necessity and that the dictum of Napoleon still stand—"God Almighty is with the strongest regiment." Then you find a second attitude which men have taken toward world good will. This group maintains that while they see no hope for understanding because they know human nature to be what it is, yet they confess

that the world would be better if it could come to pass. They are willing to honor those who hold fast to the dream. Then there is a third attitude. It is one which is prevailing today, for the world is at the bend of the road of this attitude. Men are saying we must understand one another. The gospel of Jesus has searched us and found us wanting. We have not lived life in its larger aspects on the principles of Jesus. Only the jaundiced eye of a jaded cynic would deny that fact. There must come a day of understanding and good will. So you come to the final unveiling of world fellowship and good will. We must come to see that God hath made of one blood all nations; that He does not see men in groups or classes; that He does not divide men by the barbed wire entanglements of hate and suspicion; that you do not have to isolate truth to make it safe; that we are all God's children; that the gates to the city of God are open on all sides by day and night. When that final unveiling has come, then the dawn of peace and good will shall come and we shall have fulfilled the painter's dream of Flanders' field:

"When day is ending he shall come some day,
Just as of old, just in the same old way,
Naught shall be changed.

The sunlight still shall fall
With lengthening shadows on the flower and wall,
The little tasks all finished I shall wait for him
And shall not wait in vain.
For he shall come,
Shall place upon my brow the old sweet kiss
And he shall say, 'Thou,' thou who hast waited,
I have come at last.'
The hideous dream of war is past, is past.
Oh my beloved, let thy weeping cease
For once more men are brothers, there is peace."

You witness this same four-fold unveiling in the great social enterprises of today. America seems to be debating again its whole program of social decency. Say what you will, there are those who have nothing but laughter and sneer for this social venture; others, while they do not sneer, see no hope for it, but admire the spirit of those who hold fast to the moral idealism. There is a third group which maintains that prosperity can only last while the people of the nation live soberly and decently. What we need today is the final fourth unfolding of this great enterprise of social decency which shall make men see that we are our brother's keeper; that the highest motive of life is not simply self-control but self-denial, and that for the sake of others we must sanctify ourselves. It is this

fourth unfolding in the present dilemma of social idealism which we need.

All great movements pass inevitably through these four stages. Every enterprise since the dawn of time has felt their touch. It is because we have forgotten these four stages that we are so discouraged and disillusioned about world conditions today. Jesus of Nazareth had to sit through the long hours of the morning, waiting for the full and final unveiling of His glory. We too, shall have to wait patiently at the wells of our dreams, waiting for the world to catch the radiance of the unveiling of the Kingdom of God. If the attitude of today toward world and moral problems is symbolized in the first attitude of the woman at the well of Sychar, scorn and contempt—never lose sight of the fact that larger unfoldings are destined to come as they came to her.

* * * *

All I have said so far about enterprises and movements and personalities is especially true in the realm of religion. Mankind has always passed through this cycle of unveiling, gradually passing through night into dawn and through dawn and daybreak into the full splendor of the noonday sun. Take it in the modern attitude to-

ward the Bible. There are those to whom the Bible is simply a jumble of homilies. They read it as a medley of folklore, sometimes clever and sometimes stupid. The New Testament is to them a kind of glorified Aesop's Fables. There are those who never pass beyond this first attitude toward the Bible. Then you come upon a second attitude which men have assumed to the Bible. They admire its poetry; they are gripped by its romance; they are moved by its apocryphal visions; they are disturbed by its moral challenge; they are enlightened by its history. They do not sneer at the book; they respect it and approach it with politeness, but no more. Then there is a third attitude. It is that of Coleridge who when asked why he read the Bible so frequently said, "It finds me." So today, men have come to regard it as the interpreter of their lives; the dramatization of their own inner feelings and motives. But you will never know the glory of the book until you come to a fourth unfolding of its beauty when you think of it as a garden in which the heart of the ages speaks to the heart of the Almighty and in which the heart of God is revealed unto all ages. Then you will come to it with a glorious wonder and kissing the pages of that book you will say,

"It is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, the infallible guide to God."

You meet these four unveilings in the modern attitude to the church. Dark things are being said in some circles about the fellowship of Jesus. We are living in the day of the spiritual racketeer who is never content until he has taken from men what they have without leaving anything in its place. It is by no means a small group that affirms that the church simply dulls the hope of people and provides them with an opiate to make them insensible to their wants. It is a large group indeed which holds this cynicism. Then you come upon a second group which regards the church, not with scorn or contempt, but with respect and courtesy. The church has improved their home conditions, built finer cities, made traffic on the street more safe, given the world art galleries and music. They appreciate what the church has done and with Voltaire they salute but do not speak. There is a third group which comes to a larger conception of the place of the church. Shadows have crept in their lives and dark storms have beaten them down. Crossing the threshold of the church they have found that their problems have been solved and the mysteries clarified.

They regard the church as the interpreter of man. But you will never know the glory of the church until you regard it as a fellowship of Christian people who throughout all ages and in many modes have preached the odyssey of the divine love to all peoples and nations in all climes and countries until they knelt before Him who died that we might live, who gave His life a ransom for many. We may well pray that the world come speedily to this unveiling of the meaning of the church.

But it is especially in a consideration of the life of Jesus that you find these four stages. This incident at the well is not the only one in which you come upon these unveilings of His glory. You meet it in the episode of the blind man Jesus healed. As he tells the story he lays bare his own growing response to the wonder of Jesus. He makes his defense in these terms: "A man named Jesus"; "He is a prophet"; "If He is not the Son of God"; "Lord, I believe."

It is not otherwise today. There are four modern attitudes which men have assumed toward Jesus of Nazereth and these four parallel the experience of the woman at the well of Sychar. There are those who regard Jesus of Nazereth in terms of scorn and contempt. They

cannot see how he has affected in the slightest civilizations of men or altered the course of men's lives. He is just a dreaming Galilean mechanic, a vain and vaunted visionary of Galilee! His organization comes to nothing and His life has no challenge. The world has outlived any message He may once have had. That is the vision of modern cynicism concerning Jesus of Nazereth—it is the view of scorn and contempt. There is a second attitude prevailing in the world toward Him. There are those who maintain that He was a good man just as the leaders of other religions have been good and noble and that the hope of the world, while it rests not in one religion, rests really in a composite of all religions in which they are willing to grant Jesus of Nazareth a place. They affirm that the redemption of mankind, while it does not turn on the supremacy of Jesus, will come through a blending of the lives of all religious leaders of all ages and Jesus of Nazereth shall be one color in that blending. That is the attitude of humanism. There is a third attitude which the modern world is assuming toward Jesus. It is that which you find in George Bernard Shaw, who said: "I am no more Christian than Pontius Pilate, but in Jesus of Nazereth lies the way of life for the future." It is a conception

of Jesus as an interpreter, a teacher, a man with an understanding mind. But Christ is waiting for the sunrise of that day when humanity shall break the alabaster flask of contrite devotion at His feet and cry out in an exultant voice with Thomas of old: "My Lord and my God." Through many a weary hour Jesus sat by the well that hot morning waiting until the woman who had come to see a man left proclaiming the Christ. So today, Jesus of Nazereth is waiting patiently through the hot hours for this final unveiling of the heart of man to His wonder. May the day soon break when humankind shall find this fourth unveiling of His glory!

* * * *

Among any list of five great sculptors of the last century surely the name of Dannecker must be included. He was that rare genius whose sculpture has enriched the world and thrilled all lovers of art. For years he had dedicated his genius to interpreting pagan virtues and heathen gods. He carved out of gorgeous marble the deities of the Roman religion. Then one day he determined to spend the rest of his genius in portraying Christian values and virtues. So it came to pass that he found a choice bit of marble upon which he determined to

carve the face of Jesus of Nazereth. Without divulging his plans to his friends he brought the marble to his studio, closed the door, and began working. After weeks of working in his studio in Stuttgart he was anxious to know what the world might think of his effort. So one day he brought a group of children playing in the street in Stuttgart to his studio, threw back a curtain and asked them, "Who is this?" They shouted with joy at what they saw and cried out, "It is a great man." Somewhat disappointed he sent them back to the street, closed the door of his studio and for another period gave himself with all his talent to completing his statue, shaping it in finer outline and design. Then he again invited the children of the streets of Stuttgart to come to his studio and when he had opened the door and pulled back the curtain he asked them again, "Who is this?" This time with greater reverence and with less merriment they exclaimed, "It is a good man." Rather saddened by their inability to grasp what he was trying to do he sent them away for the second time. Then without eating or sleeping, he poured into his statue all the genius and talent that he had in his great soul. Day after day he worked and slaved trying to bring some transfiguring influence in his creation. When it was

all completed he again called the children from the streets into his studio, opened the door and asked them for the third time,"Who is this?" The little children stood spellbound. They did not know what to say. They were too deeply moved to shout or make noise. Quietly they walked up to the pedestal and with tears streaming down their cheeks, kissed the statue and said, "It is Christus."

My friends, that is the dominant mission of the church today. We must portray Christ in more vivid and beautiful colors. We must pour into our enterprise larger unfoldings until the world shall see in Him, not a figure to scoff, but a Christ to worship. And men shall sing with all the ages:

"Thou, O Christ, are all I want,
More than all in Thee I find."

II

THE GATEWAY

to

THE KINGDOM

THE GATEWAY TO THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 18:3—*"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."*

I HAVE just come from a fresh reading of the New Testament in one sitting. I do that very often. Indeed it has become a habit with me. For sheer satisfaction and reward there is nothing comparable to it. This last time when I closed the book and walked away from it what impressed me most was the utter daring of Jesus. Other religions have had other founders but no religion has had a founder comparable to Jesus in the daring of his enterprise and in the venture of his faith. It is to be questioned if there ever lived one on earth comparable to Him in the gigantic program he set into operation. How we have misunderstood Him. It is all too common to portray Him as the passive sufferer who as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, opened not his mouth, forgetful that the last picture you have of Him by John as he stood on the beetling cliffs of Patmos was that of a charger riding upon a white horse, going out

single-handed conquering the world. I saw in Italy some time ago a very strange but impressive painting of the Crucifixion. As I approached the painting what struck me was that there were no nails through the palms of the hands and there was no cable fastening His feet to the cross. He stood against it voluntarily. He did not die as a Martyr but as a Saviour. He died upon the cross, not because He had to, but because He wanted to. Calvary itself was a daring venture in world redemption.

In a day when men said that holiness was a jest and every man had his price, Jesus said: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" At a time when the world was falling apart and nations were tumbling into bits, Jesus said: "I will hold the world together when I am lifted up on the cross." At a moment when men laughed at their gods and said religion did not count, Jesus said: "God is the only reality of life and religion is the only thing that matters." He risked His reputation by associating with outcast and publican. He staked the propogation of His gospel upon a handful of fishermen whom Tacitus called ignorant and illiterate, and when men said to Him: "Master, if these men fail you, what are your plans," He only replied: "I have no other

plan; I am counting on them." He guaranteed to rewrite the histories of nations; to make a world without pain, panic or disease; to build a world in which it would be safe for children to be born and old men to die in at last; to establish on this earth the Kingdom of God. Hardly had He begun to preach that story when they had Him checkmated and when, after three brief years, the hellish machinations of pharisaism sent Him to His cross, Jesus cried out exultantly, "It is finished." What impresses one most in any fresh reading of the life of Jesus is His utter daring.

You have evidence of this daring not only in the program He proposed but in the methods He determined to use to fulfill that program. Men said to Him: "Master, it is a beautiful dream and a consummation devoutly to be wished, but how shall it come to pass and by what means can it be set up?" Then you come upon the supreme daring of Jesus. He maintained that the Kingdom of Heaven could only come through little children. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." If ever the world needs proof of the daring of a

great leader as far as the methods are concerned, he will find it in this simple statement of Jesus.

* * * *

What does that mean? And what did Jesus imply when He said that the Kingdom of Heaven can come only through the gateway of childhood?

Obviously Jesus did not mean to idealize the character of children. Childhood is not always ideal. Little children are not always angelic; at least mine are not. Many a parent will awaken in the morning to find that the pillow is wet with scalding tears of grief caused by some sudden outburst of tongue or temper on the part of little children. He who knew what was in man also knew what was in little children.

And again Jesus did not mean to idealize the immaturity of childhood. He does not put a premium upon ignorance and lack of understanding. The Kingdom which He proposes to set up is not only a kingdom of grace but truth. You do not have to leave your intellect in the vestibule when you come to worship Him. The God whom He gave to men is not only a God of love but also a God of light. The symbol of the kingdom is not a stone, but a seed; it is not static,

but a growing and unfolding. Jesus did not speak these words to emphasize the necessity of immaturity of judgment or experience in the kingdom of God.

When He said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of God," he pointed to two great implications which are involved as fundamental in the coming of the Kingdom—the two essentials that mark the gateway to the Kingdom of Heaven. They are these:

I. Childhood is eternally fascinated by the unknown. Children are haunted by the sense of mystery. They live in the spirit of expectancy. They trust the invisible. They believe the unseen. They are conscious of two worlds, for always fronting the fringes and frontiers of this life is that invisible world, as real and as certain. The play of two worlds is upon them; they crowd the world with celestial visitants. The hills are filled with gold; the morning dew is to them as though God had sprinkled diamond dust on the fields; the sunset clouds make them think of angels who have come to pray in the woods and left their plumes hanging in the sky. It is childhood's fascination for the unknown which Emily Dickinson interpreted in her poem:

"Will there ever be a morning,
Is there such a thing as day,
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?
Has it feet like water lilies
Has it feathers like a bird
Does it dwell in far-off countries
Of which I have never heard?
Oh some scholar, oh some sailor
Oh some wise man from the skies
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the land called morning lies."

In that marvelous collection of paintings in the National Gallery in London there is one which always fascinates me. It is Millais' painting of the boyhood of Sir Walter Raleigh. There sits this boy with blue eyes and pink cheeks and long flaxen hair, fingering a toy which he holds in his hands. He is resting his back against the knee of an old British seaman who talks to him about far-off adventures and far-off seas. As he continues to talk about the harbors beyond the ken of man or shores beyond the limitless seas the toy falls out of the boy's fingers, his hands fall limp at his side, and there comes into his eyes the far-away look of far-off worlds. That is childhood.

Where is that today? The feeling of momentousness has gone out of life. We are no longer haunted by the spirit of expectancy. Life has become so utterly prosaic that the sense of romance and mystery has gone out of life. We are no longer fascinated by the unknown. The thought that there is a God in this world whose purposes shall be fulfilled, browbeat them though we may, is no longer held. The falling of a sparrow, the tinting of the forest leaves, the shifting of the tides, the changing seasons, no longer awaken within men thoughts of God—they are only natural phenomena. We know so much, or think we do; so many mysteries have been unraveled; so many discoveries have come into being; so many marvelous inventions have put power into our hands; so many hidden things have been revealed and clarified that the attitude of the modern world is not apt to be trustfulness, but skepticism. The feeling of mystery has gone out of life.

There is really nothing new about this fact. Jesus met it again and again in in the days of His flesh. The woman of Sychar at the well says: "Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep." In the Galilean country where He desires to feed a multitude of more than five

thousand one of His disciples suggests that they have five barley loaves and a few fishes, adding: "But what are these among so many?" The sense of mystery had gone out of their lives. They were no longer haunted by the spirit of expectancy. They did not believe He was able to meet the emergencies with invisible power. It is especially real today.

Yet without that sense of mystery and fascination for the unknown we are lost. Thomas Carlyle spoke a profound truth when he said, "A new splendor of God must come to the heart of this industrial age." Lorado Taft in a book on some characteristics of modern art said, "A new sense of infinity must come to art. Without that sense of infinity modern art and modern life will perish." Yet how little we know! "The stars come nightly to the sky, the tidal wave unto the sea," and who shall say how? Over the crass self-satisfaction of men, with their vaunted pride there must surge once more, "Be still and know that I am God." Unless that sense of mystery comes back to life, the Kingdom cannot come. "Unless ye be converted, and become as little children"—fascinated by the unknown, believing in the invisible—"Ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

* * * *

But it is deeper than that. There is another implication of Jesus in this challenging message to all who would set up the Kingdom of Heaven. Children are not only fascinated by the unknown but also by the known. Youth does not only believe in the invisible but also in the visible. Children not only trust the unseen but also the seen. Children never lose faith in the ultimate goodness of things. A drunken father staggering over the threshold of his home may snatch the toy out of the hands of his little boy who comes to greet him, and break it into shreds, but he will have to repeat that process a thousand times before the last vestige of love is lost in the soul of the boy for a worthless father. I have seen women of London stagger out of the London pubs reeling and drunken into the gutter but always clinging to their skirts was some little child who smothered the bruises with affection and kisses. Children see deeper, for penetrating the apparent lovelessness and shortcomings of life they behold the submerged goodness and smothered loveliness of human character.

Now it is much harder to be fascinated by the known than by the unknown; it is less difficult to believe in the unseen than in the seen. It is always a demonstration of finer nobility to hold

faith in the visible than in the invisible. Human nature is so brittle and there is such a narrow margin between the good and the ill that it is hard sometimes to hold even a decent opinion about man, let alone faith in him. It is always easier to send a ton of Bibles somewhere east of Suez than to read a chapter of John's gospel to a recalcitrant neighbor. It is easier to take up a collection for savages in a heathen world far away than to pay the hospital bill of a charwoman whose naughty son is always throwing stones at your garage windows. It is easier to love the unseen than the seen.

That constitutes the great problem of the world today. Can we who know the world also love it? Does a faith in the world keep pace with a knowledge of the world? The world is very small today and we have come to know it. It has so shriveled and shrunken that you can hold it in your hands and put your fingers all about it. We know the world today. Modern science and inventions have brought far distant seas and lands within the reach of every person. For many years an American traveler was in the habit of journeying into the heart of the Belgian Congo on a commercial enterprise. Every spring for some eighteen years he had made that journey inland from the coast. It always re-

quired thirty-one days. Last year he made the same journey back and forth in six hours and he rested his airplane on a little plateau and as he ate his lunch turned on a radio in his plane to hear the orchestra of a night club in New York City. The world indeed has shrunken. While I was writing these very words my two boys were sitting by my side listening to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata played by a symphony orchestra in a London music hall. We know the world. But the question is, have we faith in it? Does our knowledge of the world synchronize with our love for it?

It ought to be true that as we come to know men we come to love them too, but it does not always work out that way. I was sitting one day on the aft deck of a Trans-Atlantic liner homeward bound. I was chatting with a company of American tourists who were coming home from their first European tour. They claimed to know all about Europe because they had traveled through the whole of it in six and one-half days. When I asked them what they thought of Europe they told me they did not like it because it was difficult to get ice water at meals and the plumbing in the hotels was poor. They had come to know Europe but they had no love for it. Their faith

did not synchronize with their knowledge. That is the difficulty of life today. We have lost faith in the visible and are desperately skeptical toward the possibility of world reconstruction. We do not believe in it! That was the anxiety in the mind of Jesus when He said to His disciples, looking forward into the centuries, "When the Son of Man cometh will He find faith on the earth?" And how much faith is there among men for the earth? Yet without it we are lost. The Kingdom of Heaven can never come until we are converted and become as little children with a new highborn faith in the visible and a new fascination for the known.

That was the glory of Jesus. He who knew men best never lost faith in them. If anyone ever had occasion to doubt the worth of human nature it was Jesus of Nazereth who saw it at its worst. But He never lost hope in its ultimate reclaiming. A despised tax gatherer becomes the writer of His first gospel; an intolerant bigot becomes His evangel of love; a doubting skeptic goes out to preach the eternal convictions of the resurrection. Jesus never lost faith in the visible world. The world is waiting for the sunrise of that belief.

When I was at Oxford last summer there came to me again the story of that remarkable student

who had come to the University to study some sixty years ago. He came from a small Welsh seacoast summer town. When he enrolled at the University men believed he would have a great career for he was full of high promise. During the second year at Oxford he met three little children to whom he told a lovely story. To one child he told a lovely story as she was with him in his boat punting down the Thames; to another he told a lovely story under the thatched roof of the barn of an English estate; the third story he told to a little girl walking down the dusty road of his own Welsh country with its well-trimmed hawthorn hedges. A few years later he wrote these stories on a bit of manila paper. Not long ago that bit of writing was sold to an American for seventy thousand dollars, because, you know, it was the manuscript copy of "Alice in Wonderland." Lewis Carroll will be remembered not because he was a great scientist, although he was that; not because he was a great mathematician, although he was the greatest mathematician in England of his day; but his name will be immortalized because out of love for those whom he knew he told a lovely story which has forever transformed the lives of

little children. So only shall the Kingdom of Heaven come.

"Except ye be converted and become as little children"—with a love for the unseen and the seen, with a faith for the invisible and the visible, fascinated by the unknown and the known —"ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

III

VALUES

in

THE KINGDOM

VALUES IN THE KINGDOM

St. Matthew 6:32—*"After all these things do the Gentiles seek."*

LAST SUNDAY I thought with you a little while upon one of the doors that opens into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Unless ye become as little children (with their fascination for the unknown and their faith in the known), ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Today I propose to think with you of a second condition which Jesus places before those who would enter into the will and way of God. As I read the Gospels I discover that all the great affirmations of Jesus are surrounded by high restrictions. They invite men into the Kingdom but always conditionally. They open beautiful vistas, but before one may enter upon them a threshold must be crossed and a door must be opened. You cannot walk from the level of the street into the golden throneroom of God's presence. We are so apt to talk men rather glibly into the Kingdom of Heaven. We have made religion so easy that we have cheapened it. But

that was not the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth. His Gospel with all its inviting challenges is full of reservations. Not only did He say that child-mindedness is an eternal condition into the Kingdom of Heaven but He also demanded a high standard of values and higher levels of appreciation of those who aspired to citizenship in His Kingdom.

One day on the quiet hillsides of His beloved country Jesus greeted a vast concourse of people who had come to hear Him preach. It was at the opening of His ministry when He had awakened a great interest in His Gospel among masses of men. On that quiet hillside He spoke that day and other days upon the fundamental principles which obtain in the Kingdom of God. The Sermon on the Mount is the manifesto of the Christian faith. It has been called rightly the Magna Charta of all discipleship. In the course of that sermon Jesus urged upon His disciples the quality of high-mindedness, the necessity of walking the high road in which high standards of life shall prevail. Then suddenly you stumble upon this sentence of my text, which is a parenthesis. It is not part of the argument, but rather an aside. Jesus had been pleading for these higher values, warning men

against mere "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed." Then turning quickly to those who sat nearest Him and who knew Him best, almost under his breath He added, "after all these things do the Gentiles seek." In that simple parenthetic expression He gives the world a new lesson in values and a warning against pagan standards.

Now in the day in which Jesus lived there were many people whose sole concern of life was, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed." The one subject of their conversation, their first waking thought in the morning and the last lingering idea in their minds before sleeping, the one and only essential thing of life that stood in the fore-front of everything was the question of clothing. Their one desire was to make a good appearance and in all due pomp to parade before men. Their Saviour was a tailor and their Bible a fashion plate. Take away from them the possession of garments and though they had all things yet were they miserable. It was the one thing for which they lived. And again, in the world in which He lived, Jesus knew the coarse Romans whose bodies were their masters, whose only concern was for food. They placed caterers before philosophers and chefs before

teachers. Their one question in life was, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink?" At their pagan festivals, sitting at tables groaning under the weight of food, these Roman libertines gorged themselves, then going to the hot Roman baths they would disgorge themselves, and return to their tables ever loaded with rich food and fruits brought from the ends of the earth. Paul met these men whose only "God was their belly." Life had no value beyond food and clothing. These constituted the ends of life.

It may seem a far call from that day to this, and yet after the rainfall of twenty centuries we have people with the mind of that First Century world. Material wealth bulks large in the minds and struggles of men today. To many travellers Paris means no more than a city to buy smart clothing. Not long ago I was sitting on the deck of a trans-Atlantic liner, homeward bound, talking with a company of tourists returning from Europe. When I asked one of them what city he liked best of his whole summer on the Continent he replied quickly, "The City of Munich." And when I asked the reason he said, "Because there I had the finest food on the Continent." For many people, their attitude to places in Europe is entirely determined by things

to eat or clothing to wear. There are people who, when you tell them of your plan to visit a certain city, will reply enthusiastically, "It is worth while going to that city just for its food." The big thing in life is what to eat and what to wear. Let some doctor tell them that they must strike a more balanced diet and the whole motive of living leaves them; their program of life turns on the standard of living which Jesus called pagan. The ermine cloak only hides an empty heart, while love for music, appreciation for art are but hollow terms to them.

When Jesus met these conditions he said to His disciples, Beware of them for they are but pagan values; "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." Fine raiment, rich food, rare vintage, soft couches—life does not turn on these things. Whatever you may think of them, they do not constitute the *Summum Bonum*. As well feed a lamb with carrion, a jungle tiger with sawdust, and a hungry wolf with ashes, as to suppose that humanity can subsist on such things only.

* * * *

My friends, life can teach no greater lesson than this power of discernment, a standard of evaluation beyond the pagan. I recall one day

standing on a well-trimmed, thick-turfed lawn in the quadrangle of New College, Oxford, with a company of scholars from various portions of Europe and North America. We were discussing Oxford University in comparison with other large universities, especially of North America. Each one of that group found it difficult to surrender his belief in the superiority of his own college or university to any other university in Europe; we never got very far in that discussion because inevitably we came back to the question, "What is the function of a university and what is education?" When we fell to discussing education one of the group said, "To me an educated man is one who has the power of discrimination." And so it is. An educated man is one who knows the difference between scholarship and superficiality, between star-light and a firefly, between halo and hysteria, between eminence and prominence, between what is supreme and what is subordinate, between the major and the minor emphases of life. That is what Emerson had in mind when he wrote, "The supreme lesson of life is to learn what the centuries say against the hours."

How real was this power of discrimination in the life of Jesus. One day the disciples thought

that He was out of sorts with them because they had failed to bring him food from a nearby village. But Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, for my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." His parents one day talked with Him about His duty of staying home with them, living as other children lived, and helping His father make wooden yoke for oxen; but Jesus' only comment was, "I must be about my Father's business." Paul had that power of discrimination, too. The Galatian Christians came to him with heated argument as to the attitude they should assume toward ceremonial practices and customs, but Paul simply replied, "Let no man trouble me (about these things)—for I bear branded in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The over-mastering concern of his life was, "I must see Rome," and before that supreme end everything else became inconsequential. The Kingdom of Heaven opens to that man who has learned to discriminate between human values, avoiding those things after which the Gentiles seek.

* * * *

It constitutes life's greatest need. The test of civilization is its standards of satisfaction. It may be hard to follow the high road, it may be

easy to drift with the current, to walk the primrose path of dalliance, and to follow the lines of least resistance, but the door of the Kingdom of Heaven swings open only to those who have learned to discriminate. There are imprisoned splendors in many lives which should be released. We were meant to fly like eagles; we have no right to scratch like sparrows. We have been created to think God's thoughts after Him; we have no right to live like swine in sties. We are citizens of two worlds, for always skirting the things of today are the frontiers of that unseen world crowding close to us in which God meant us to live; and we have no right to shut that world out of our thinking, saying, "One world at a time." What indiscriminateness there is about life today!

I am not thinking of the choice between the sordid and the saint, between worldliness and godliness, between sunlight and shadows. Rather I am thinking of that discretion which we need in the choice of things that are good. There are so many good causes which deserve support and so many noble undertakings to which men may well commit their lives. But there is a danger that we hold too many threads in our hands. Always in order to do one thing well we must be

willing to forego other things. Not that these other things are not good, but they are not good for one who has a definite objective to life. A salesman with too many side-lines will sooner or later become bankrupt. If the engineer on the express train to New York so loses his power of discrimination that instead of keeping his train on the track he runs it over a culvert into meadows to pick daisies in open fields, there will not be morticians enough to give decent interment to those who are killed. If a river so loses its power of discrimination that it insists upon breaking over its borders and covering other lands, it ceases to be a river and becomes a swamp.

There is no group of men for whom this lack of discrimination is so livid and lurid a danger as the Christian minister. Today he is compelled to be a leader of all groups, a member of all kinds of enterprises, a crusader of all manner of worthy interests, a literary critic, a reviewer of books, a popular after-dinner speaker, well versed in political science, until at last the Church discovers that something has gone out of that man which it needs but which it has given him no time to keep. It is possible so to become all things to all men that you become nothing

to any man. The problem of life today is the power of discrimination.

Take it in reading. We have never had so many libraries, and never has so much literature come to the disposal of the peoples of earth. And we are reading without discrimination. In fact, is it not all too common that books are read just to kill time or to put in an evening? Then, too, some books had better been left unread, indeed unwritten. It ought to be a badge of honor for a man to say that there are some things he hasn't read.

Take it in friendship. There is something fine about those dynamic personalities which creep into the lives of men now and then. We cannot but love them. Charles Kingsley spoke the voice of many a one on earth when in a reply to a question that was asked him as to what constituted the secret of his life, said, "I had a friend." When Phillips Brooks walked down Newspaper Row in Boston on a rainy day a strange contentment came to those who saw him pass and their dark clouds seemed to be lifted. But even in friendship we need discrimination. Not all those with magnetic personalities are deserving of our confidences. There must be something more to a man than his glamor to

make him worthy of your fellowship. Mix gold with iron and you have an alloy but the gold is gone. The bard of Avon has the warning,

> *"The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,*
> *Grapple to thy soul with hoops of steel."*

Take it in our daily lives. Because they are unwilling to be known as a prig or a prude, how many indulge in the things of today for which really they have no heart. We dislike to be above the crowd. There is so much colorless living today because we believe that in Rome we must do as the Romans do. We hesitate to say No, and we are destroying the thresholds of our lives. Many people are afraid to discriminate, having no thought of the momentousness of life. We do not like to be different from men. Is it not true that we who bear the name of Christian are too often content with the things "after which the Gentiles seek"? There is perhaps no greater need in our daily walk among men than a new standard of valuation, a new discrimination against pagan values.

* * * *

This power of discrimination has an especial bearing on the religious problems of today. We keep our religion too much within the range of

pagan considerations. Physical standards and material things bulk too large in the world of the spirit. What pagan ideals prevail in our conception of the Christian Church. It is all too common to judge the Church by physical equipment and material standards! The progress of an individual Church is often measured only by its physical resources. We have associated the revival of religion with a building program until we regard the enlargement of material values as the proof of spiritual conquests. We have confused the Church with Italian marble and worship with golden altars. It is all too common to judge the strength of a Church by value of its material assets. My friends, I for one, would rather worship God in sincerity and truth with the Scotch covenanters on the bleak hillsides of Scotland swept by mists, than to bow my knee before Him in jewel-studded palaces served by gold-robed priests carrying diamond-studded incense vessels in a worship that is only formal and without heart. We need a new discrimination in our attitude to worship.

I remember that day in old Geneva when I stood for the first time in that impressive but very humble Church where John Calvin

preached a new hope to the children of men, a hope which has altered the history of the last centuries. It was a very small meeting place, with its little wooden benches without backs, seating perhaps four hundred people, with its little winding pulpit so uninviting and aloof. There was no light, no heat in the Church. There was no music at the service. The preacher wore no tapestried robes. There was no swinging of incense vessels, and yet that simple message preached in that humble place of meeting has transformed the history of the modern world. I wonder whether Calvin ever wished for a larger stage or a better setting or more adequate equipment? In the light of the passing centuries had he realized these values he might have been forgotten, while the truth he spoke in humble surroundings has remolded the history of the modern world.

Then, too, what lack of discrimination one often finds among Christian people in their attitude to Christian truth. It is one of the regrettable things of religious life today that there is so much puttering about little things. For many people the Bible rises or falls upon such minor and inconsequential things. Their whole attitude to the Scriptures turns on

questions such as, "How did Joshua make the sun stand still," "Are there two Isaiahs," "Where did Cain get his wife," "How did Jonah live in a whale," "Is the Babylon of the book of the Revelations the Catholic Church and the Pope of Rome?" All the religious thinking for all too many turns on these things. We seemingly have forgotten that we are meant to saturate our language with its vocabulary and our lives with its spirit. What Gentile imitation there is in religious thinking. We think so small about small things. The God of many people in many churches is not a big enough God.

This warning of Jesus about pagan values is especially striking in our attitude toward prayer. I fancy that as fervent prayers rise from earnest hearts on earth to God in Heaven and there are registered, God must look down from Heaven and call back to us, "I have heard your prayers, I have registered your desires; but why ask me for these petty things?" All the resources of earth are at our disposal and all the riches of the ages are ours to command and yet we are content to ask for such little things. We are afraid to pray for the things that are supreme. The sense of daring has gone out of our prayer life. We are so poor when all the forces of

Heaven desire to make us rich. William Carey, the Scotch cobbler, went to the heart of heathenism hanging upon the wall of his home the challenging assurance, "Expect great things of God and attempt great things for Him." What indiscriminateness there is in our prayer life. We ask for such small things when God would make us rich with the supreme gifts of Heaven.

There is a story in the life of Jesus of Nazareth that grips me with every fresh reading. One day passing by a dusty road in Palestine in the company of His disciples, a man on the edge of the crowd, standing by the wayside called out, "Have mercy upon me." The Master with His disciples walked on as if the voice had been lost in the noise of the crowd. Then again the blind man raised his voice, with the wail, "Have mercy upon me." Still the answer does not come to his prayer, and the Master is seemingly heedless of the blind man's distress. Suddenly Jesus halted upon the way, turned back and addressing the blind man said, "What is it that I can do unto thee?" That is a strange approach. Apparently Jesus had heard the man all along, else why would He have stopped to ask the man this question? How can you explain this failure of Jesus to answer this prayer that pressed itself from

the blind man twice? The difficulty was not with Jesus but with the man himself. His prayer had been on the pagan standard of values. He asked for mercy which was simply a polite way of saying, "Throw me a farthing." They still ask for mercy in this matter at the roadsides of the orient today; what they mean and want is really a beggar's fee. But Jesus startled the man by demanding of him the power of discrimination. He awakened in the man standards far beyond pagan values, and the man responded, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." That prayer was answered. Jesus had awakened in the man discrimination in prayer, and he went on his way rejoicing. What He did to the blind man on the roadside of Palestine He does over and over again to the lives of men today who are embittered by prayers that go unanswered, but whom Christ is bringing by that very channel to new values and new requests in prayer.

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What are the rewards which come through this new standard of discrimination, beyond pagan values? Jesus of Nazareth standing on the quiet mountain side of His home country called out to all the world, "If a man seeks first

the Kingdom of God, all these other things will be added." If you seek the higher, the lower will come. Every life that learns to evaluate will never suffer from the want of those things that even Gentiles seek after. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." No man has ever placed God first and supreme in His life but what he found that all the things essential to life were provided for him, too. The history of the Old Testament holds no more romantic figure than King Solomon. One night in a dream in Gideon Jehovah appeared; and God said, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon said, "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great loving kindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee. And now, O Jehovah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen a great people. Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil." And God said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast

asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern justice; behold, I have done according to thy word. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." That is the unearned increment that God provides for those who seek God's higher values.

Rome said, "Seek my power," but its greatness has faded away; Greece said, "Find my culture," but the glory that was Greece has ceased to be; Phœnecia said, "Build my ships," but the fame of Phœnecia, like her ships, has been sunk in the depths of the sea; Egypt said, "Erect my monuments," but Egypt and her pyramids lie buried under the hot sands of the desert; Babylon said, "Go after my pleasures," but the splendor of Babylon, like her pleasures, has passed into dreams. Then came Jesus of Nazareth; standing before men He said, "Seek ye the Kingdom of God, follow me, and I will give you a lasting glory." That is still His challenge to the children of men. And what are these worthwhile things? They are the things which the boatman with the silver oars will let you carry as cargo as he brings you across the river

that has no bridge into the land of unbroken sunshine: character, faith, truth, love.

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When I began writing this sermon I wondered how I might hold it before you in such a way that would write it forever on your hearts. I was looking for some way to summarize all that we have been thinking about today. Then it came to me. A few days ago in a nearby city I visited one of the most choice estates I have ever seen in America, patterned after an old English estate. It was all-gorgeous in its setting of rolling land, surrounded by woodland on creeping hills. In one nook was a lovely pool fed by the stream of a hidden spring where long-necked, white-plumed geese had their habitation. In the center, set as an amethyst in a circle of diamonds, surrounded by lovely trees and turf, there stood a castle with its Normanesque tower and architecture, and a Roman well nearby. Within that home were Italian fieplaces, Belgian tapestries on the walls, oriental rugs on tiled floors, rare paintings on the walls, and costly bits of Egyptian alabaster stood on carved pedestals in front of beautiful French

hangings and draperies. I said to my friend, "How happy these people must have been who once lived here." My friend turned to me and said, "Not at all. For some twenty years two people lived in this house, a husband and wife. They were worth millions of money, but during the years of their residence they never spoke to one another. When they passed they never greeted each other with so much as a nod. They never sent birthday remembrances to one another or on Christmas morning wished one another the season's happiness. Whenever they were forced by circumstances to confer they wrote letters or communicated through attorneys. They had taken pains to pick flawless marble, costly tile, rare fabric, genuine alabasters, and rich hangings, but they had not taken pains to maintain that choicest of all gifts: the gift of love and confidence. They had discriminating standards of pagan values, but they lacked a discernment for the things that count in the Kingdom of God. When I walked out of those gardens that evening these words of Jesus of Nazareth burned in my heart, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven."

"The night has a thousand eyes,
The day but one;
Yet the light of a whole world dies,
With the setting sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes,
The heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies,
When love is gone."

Ye that are risen with Christ seek the things that are above.

IV

THE CULTURE

of

THE KINGDOM

"THE CULTURE OF THE KINGDOM"

LUKE 2:52—*"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and Man."*

THERE IS A SENTENCE one often hears these days. It is current everywhere in literature and conversation. Indeed that sentence is so commonplace it has lost its sting and falls on dull ears. Every red-backed magazine article on current events begins with this sentence. Every new book on passing attitudes of modern life is apt to have this sentence tucked away somewhere in the introductory paragraph. Every orator in his deliverance upon the solution of modern problems is sure to begin his address with this sentence. The next time I hear it or read it I shall go mad! It is this: "We are living in a changing world."

There is nothing new about it; it is simply the rattling of dry bones. Every generation has been compelled to live that down. A few summers ago I chanced to be in Constantinople and I went to see what every traveler in the Near East goes to see—that marvelous museum of antiquity standing on the Golden Horn. In one of the rooms a guide pointed out to me one

of the most interesting things in the museum. It is a bit of papyrus—the oldest writing paper in the world. Its edges are cracked and brittle and faded. But what interested me most was not the papyrus itself but the sentence that had been written on it, said to be the oldest sentence in writing that has yet been found. This is the sentence: "Alas, times are not what they used to be—children no longer obey their parents." You see, we are living in a changing world.

And yet whether we like it or no, it is true that ours is a changing world. Life today is utterly unlike the life of the previous generation. The world in which we live is different from the world in which our fathers found themselves. It is different for three fundamental reasons.

I. The world in which we live has robbed life of deep and lasting friendships. We seem to have lost the very equipment and machinery for making and maintaining friendship. In a previous generation when for the most part men lived in villages and small communities, all the restraints and contacts of village life were known and experienced. One hundred years ago the population of New York City, Boston, Phila-

delphia, Baltimore and Washington was approximately 135,000. The total population of these cities now with their metropolitan areas is somewhere around twelve million. In the cities people live in canyon-like streets with standardized apartments and standardized doors and standardized locks in which no one knows and, what is infinitely more significant, no one cares who their neighbors are. The price we are compelled to pay for modern progress is the loss of deep and lasting friendships.

II. Another striking characteristic of modern life is this: The world in which we live is one in which life is over-stimulated. I am always interested to observe my two boys on Christmas evening. As they sit about the Christmas trees they are really surfeited with things. They have received so many gifts; so many unaccustomed possessions have been put in their keeping; so many toys have come to them which they have not learned to use that at the end of the day they are tired of things and surfeited with their possessions. If they do anything with them it is to break them. Their lives have been over-stimulated. They have received so many things which they do not know how to handle that they are content to break them. It is a

picture of life in this generation. We are simply surfeited with possessions. So many inventions have been made; so many discoveries have come to the front; so many mysteries have been unraveled and so many problems have been solved that life today is simply surfeited with things, and because we do not know how to handle them, for we have no precedent to go by, we either destroy them or are destroyed by them. We are too rich and we have too many advantages. Life is over-stimulated.

III. Then too, the world in which we live is pitifully imperfect. You do not have to put your ear close to the ground to discover the wrongs of life. The realities drag far behind the ideals and what we desire is much in advance of what we are. We live in a world stricken with economic wreckage. Those who once thought themselves rich are suddenly caught by the wind-shifts of life and thrown into poverty. Overnight men's wealth has faded away and disappeared like snow flakes falling on blast furnaces. And the end is not yet. It is a world also of political wreckage. Kingdoms and governments which we supposed to be permanent are in constant fluctuation and disintegration. Half the world today is living on the edge of

revolution. Not many governments would dare to guarantee insurance against unrest. It is a world also of religious wreckage. So many questions have been asked and so many doubts have been raised that men do not know what to believe. Current thought with all its isms and vagaries has uprooted the faith of many until they do not know what to accept.

That is the world which this present generation is facing. It is not their invention; neither did they ask it to be given to them. But it is the only world that they have and the only world that they will know. If they are to assume some responsibility and leadership in modern life it must be upon the background of these three facts.

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The question arises: How can we play our part in such a world? How shall we prepare ourselves for the life we must live under these conditions?

Doctor Henry Van Dyke suggests,

"Four things a man must learn to do,
If he would make his record true:
To think without confusion clearly,
To love his fellow men sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
And trust in God and Heaven securely."

But these four may be reduced essentially to three. By these three the greatest of all students in the world—Jesus of Nazareth—lived and through them developed His own all-glorious life. Years later when the story of His life was being written they wrote this of Him, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." They are three: the impulse inward, the impulse outward, and the impulse upward; wisdom, love, and faith; culture, friendship, and religion; self-reverence, self-denial, and divine reliance; independence, inter-dependence, and dependence; know thyself, know thy world, and know thy God; personal initiative, social responsibility and spiritual discernment. It means the training of the intellect, the development of the emotions, and the unfolding of the heart.

Now these three elements of all true culture must be found in every individual and must always be held in balance. Sometimes you come upon a person who has only developed the first, to the neglect of the second and third, and such a person always is oversensitive. Sometimes you meet with those who have developed the second, to the exclusion of the first and third, and such people are apt to be over-sentimental. Then

too, there are those who neglect the first and second in the sole development of the third, and such people inevitably become over-superstitious. These three tendencies are found not only in individuals but in civilizations. There have been times when mankind has thought only of the first, losing sight of the second and third, and you have the age of scholasticism. There have been eras in the story of mankind when the second was developed, to the exclusion of the first and third, and you have the age of humanitarianism. There have been periods in human history when only the third was dominant, with never a thought upon the first or second, and you have an age of monasticism. The educated man must develop these three and must hold them in true balance and proportion.

I. The first element of all true education is culture, wisdom, or self-reverence. The Greeks called it, "Know thyself." Self-reverence is that element of character without which no one can be great or good very long. Every individual must live his own life, determine his own destiny. To each one God has given talents which it is not only your privilege but your first duty to develop. Have you ever realized that whatever God creates, to that He gives individuality?

There are a million autumn-tinted leaves on the oak forests flecking the glorious hills, but every leaf differs from every other leaf in outline and color. A thousand stars shine in the summer night sky but every star differs from every other star in glory. So it is with personality. God casts each life into a different mould and when that life has been made God breaks the mould. The danger of today is standardization. We are all too willing to live life in the groove of precedent. It is so easy to conform. To many people the community is the lowest unit of thought and individuality gets but scant regard. In such an age there comes surely the call of the old Greek world, "Know thyself." Allow yourself time to be alone with your own unfolding thoughts and with the great books of literature. Learn to think, and what is more important, think through. We shall never find our place in the world until we have first found ourselves.

"To thine own self be true
And it shall follow as the night the day.
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

II. But there is more to education than simply the knowledge of self. To self-reverence must be linked self-denial, and with wisdom

there must come love. Education involves not only the training of the intellect but also the training of the emotions; it is not only the impulse inward but the impulse outward that is involved. That constitutes, I believe, the danger of present-day education. We are content with self-reverence and wisdom, but we fail to link these to friendship and the sense of inter-dependence. To personal initiative must be added the sense of social responsibility if education is to be safe and complete.

So much present day education has lost sight of this second unfolding. Mankind today is riddled with the philosophy of self-expression, which has lost the balance of social responsibility. To the philosophy of the Greek, "Know thyself," there must be added that other, "I am my brother's keeper." It is hazardous to live one's life simply upon the principle, "Obey that impulse and let yourself go." If that idea of education prevails unrestricted and without reservation, the ultimate end of life will be nihilism. If self-expression comes in conflict with traditional standards, away with tradition! At best it is only an attempt to keep alive in the Twentieth Century a bit of mid-Victorianism! We are not honor-bound to maintain the rule of

the majority; we are only compelled to follow the urge within us. That is the simple ungloved philosophy of self-expression. It does not solve the problems of life; it only multiplies them. Jesus of Nazareth gave a picture of a man who was motivated solely by self-expression. There he sits at the swine trough of a strange man's land, eating sour cow beans fed to the swine on the open hills. That is the inevitable goal of every life that only obeys the spirit of personal initiative.

Many a match game has been lost by a team of experts, stars, and prima donnas, because they did not learn to play together. You may sit on pillowed divans and prattle about independence and personal liberty but what of those masses who sit at the open door of your home, hear your mad prattling over tea cups, and go out into the world to put into practice what you say out loud? It is your privilege to think what you like upon any great question or problem, but what of those who are less trained in mind, who snatch the torch of your unbalanced individualism and set the world on fire until there is a conflagration which no sane leadership can extinguish? Education means not only, "know thyself," but "know your world." To

wisdom there must be added love, and to independence there must be added inter-dependence.

One incomparable story will always grip us in any study of the life of Tolstoy. It took place on a day after he had renounced all his wealth and affluence. He was walking along a dusty rural road in northern Russia. As he passed by there met him two Russian peasants who were mere beggars, living upon the alms of the more fortunate. These two men recognized Tolstoy and knew him as a man of wealth. Leaving his comrade by the roadside, the first beggar rushed hotly in pursuit of Count Tolstoy to ask for a bit of an alm, just a beggar's fee. Tolstoy halted upon the road and talked to the stranger a moment while the other beggar stood waiting and wondering some distance behind. Suddenly he saw his comrade running to him as fast as he could and there was a light in his eye like the light that never shines on land or sea. He called out to his comrade as he ran to meet him, "Did he give you anything?" The comrade called back, "No, he gave me nothing, but he called me brother." My friends, the world is waiting for the sunrise of that spirit and blessed is he whose education leads him to a larger understanding of the world's problems.

III. But there is more to education than that. There have been many who knew themselves and knew the world and yet made a wreck of life. The history of mankind holds the records of the blasted influences of those who had wisdom and love but nothing more. Education must be something more than the training of the intellect or the emotions; it must lead to the training of the heart if it would be complete. To culture there must come friendship and to friendship there must be added religion. To the spirit of independence and inter-dependence there must come also a profound sense of dependence upon God. To loyalty to self, and loyalty to those about you, there must be added that higher loyalty called faith.

Do not mistake it. A life that looks only inward and outward, but never upward, can never be permanently great or good. Religion is still the dominant force in personality and the controlling influence in all true education. Let me illustrate. Here is a boy of about twelve years. He has a very bad habit of trying to steal rides on trolley cars. Take that boy with that bent of mind; send him to a university; educate him until his name is smothered in halos of degrees; train his mind but nothing more; develop his

intellect but nothing beyond that; and when he leaves college he won't steal a ride on a trolley car—he will steal the whole trolley system. Theodore Roosevelt never spoke more profoundly than when he said, "To train a man mentally without training him morally is to make him a menace to society." That is what Emerson had in mind when he wrote, "The supreme lesson of life is to learn what the centuries say against the hours."

There are two kinds of knowledge known among men. One is the knowledge that comes by observation and research. It is so that we come to know the events of history, the chemistry of the atom, and the weight of star clusters. It is a knowledge which comes through observation and research. But there is another kind of knowledge born not of fact but faith, not through research but through reverence, which though unseen is quite as real. To be sure, this second kind of knowledge does not analyze a chemical compound, or demonstrate horsepower units, but it comes to you when you stand at the cradle of life and speaks of the glory of living; it comes when you stand on the hill of life and challenges you with the duty of living; it comes when you stand at the grave of life and it tells

you of immortality. That second kind of knowledge is as real and essential as the first. He who has only the former knowledge and neglects that which comes by faith is only half educated and that, the lower half.

This constitutes a supreme danger to life today. There are multitudes of men whose only God is a test tube; to whom religion is the fiction of the feeling of inferiority; who run back the eternal forces of life to glands, sex, libido, or some other hokus-pokus; to whom the Almighty is a Santa Claus; who go into extravagant ecstasies of what would happen to the world if an electron exploded, who substitute for theology a dissertation on eugenics, or a discourse on "the concomitant reactions of psycho-physical parallelisms." They hold that religion is well enough for morons and under-privileged minds, but not for men who know. They believe that religion once had its day, but that its day is done. To them it is so much excess baggage, a going through motions that are meaningless. And yet such men attempt to define religion to mankind. As well try to write the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah with a barge pole!

I recall one night speaking to a company of boys in a summer camp around a camp fire.

What I said that night I have forgotten and I am very sure the boys have. But after looking into the flame for a long time I looked up into the night sky and I said, "I have never seen the heavens as black as they are tonight." I sat a little while longer, all alone; the boys had rolled themselves up in their blankets and gone to sleep. Out of the dying camp fire there shot one glorious, dying, iridescent flame and I said to myself, "The heavens are getting blacker." Then an hour passed and the last flame of the camp fire had spent its glory. Again I looked up into the sky and I could see here and there and everywhere the lights of the evening stars shining in the night sky. The glory of the flame was but for a moment; when it had passed there were these eternal lights in the heavens. So it is always in human life. When the glory and the importance of, "what shall we eat and what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed," shall have been spent, then the stars of the night-sky shall shine with an undying and undimmed luster. That is the reward of culture in the Kingdom.

"The stars shine over the earth,
The stars shine over the sea;
The stars look up to God
And the stars look down upon me;

The stars shall shine for a million years,
For a million years and a day;
But God and I shall live and love
When the stars have passed away."

V

THE GOSPEL *of* THE KINGDOM

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

St. John 6:68—*"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."*

THERE is a growing criticism that Christianity is not adequate to meet present-day problems. Mankind does not seem to be satisfied any longer with Jesus of Nazareth. There is a feeling that He is not indispensable because He is not adequate. The whole present-day fad of humanism is but an expression of that feeling. It affirms that the hope of the world rests not in one religion but in a composite of all religions, of which the Christian religion is but one. It maintains that the redemption of the world rests not in the supremacy of Jesus Christ but in a blending of the ministries of all great religious leaders in which Christ is but one figure. That is simply another way of saying that Jesus of Nazareth is inadequate; it is a polite way of bowing Him out of the central position of the world's hope. It is a prevalent and persistent tendency which imitates Demas of old, who turned his back upon Paul, confessing that Paul's gospel was beautiful but was impossible

of fulfillment. It was the feeling of Carlyle who, standing before a wayside shrine in rural southern France, was heard to say, "Poor Christ, you have had your day." You have it in Wells' book on "The Salvaging of Civilization," in which he makes a plea for a new religion with a new Bible because the old have broken down.

That feeling of the inadequacy of Jesus arises out of two fundamental facts. Christ is inadequate because He has so little and such poor material with which to work. Tacitus said that he had no quarrel with Jesus of Nazareth, but when he saw the ignorant and illiterate men who proclaimed His gospel he lost all faith in the venture. One often hears today that smart men keep out of the Church and that the company of Christian believers is but a pitiful collection of morons and underbred. The attitude of many people to the inadequacy of the Christian religion parallels Germany's scorn of the first British Expeditionary Force during the war, which they called "the army of contemptibles." There is nothing new about this. Jesus always had to meet that attitude. His disciples came to Him when He desired to

feed a multitude of five thousand with an evening meal, bringing the only apparent food supply available saying, "What are these among so many?" They did not believe that He was adequate with the resources placed at His disposal to meet the needs of the hour. It is still the judgment of many today.

But there is a deeper reason why apparently men are not satisfied with Jesus of Nazareth. They maintain that He knew nothing about this present world. He proposes to give advice about problems which He never met and which He never dreamed would exist. He lived in an oriental world in which people spoke in symbols, talked in dreams, and philosophied in parables. Ours is a matter of fact, realistic, unpoetic world of hard-as-bullets facts. How, then, can He satisfy us? He lived in a very small world. Jesus of Nazareth never traveled more than one hundred miles from home, and standing on the Mount of Olives by Jerusalem He could look through the length and breadth of His country. He never left that small country of His. Today we live in a very large world and are familiar, by contact and travel, with the whole of it. How can His view of the world be adequate for us? How can a small-town man speak to the soul of

an internationally minded world? He lived in an autocratic world. The state was supreme, the masses of men counted only as spokes in the wheel. The destinies of a whole nation rested upon the whim or wish of one man or a small coterie of leaders. We live in a day of democracy where the rights of man are never altogether out of the planning and thinking of statesmen and leaders. Jesus knew nothing about democracy and its problems. How, then, can He propose to provide adequate leadership for democracy of which He knew nothing?

There are many other elements that go to make up life today with which Jesus of Nazareth was unfamiliar and of which He had no knowledge by personal experience. We live in a totally different world with different attitudes to science, social responsibilities, economic problems, and political relationships. Men are saying today, "How can Jesus of Nazareth satisfy this world crowded with problems which He Himself never met in His day?" Take it in the modern conception of marriage. How can Jesus of Nazareth adequately solve the problem of marriage so grimly real in our world when He Himself knew nothing about marriage? He was a celibate. How can Jesus understand the prob-

lem of old age when He Himself was never old, for He died at thirty-three? How can Jesus provide leadership in the scientific world when in His time men supposed the world was flat with an area underneath it called Hades for the lost souls and with a story above it for the departed souls that rest in the Lord? Then, too many are much concerned about art and painting, but Jesus knew nothing about these. He is silent on so many things which are vital today and pressing in importance. He said nothing about slavery, child labor, political tyranny, democracy, or scientific inquiry. It is naturally supposed because He is silent on these things that He has no solvent for them.

Is there an answer to this question? Does Jesus really satisfy? In the light of the questions that have been raised how can He satisfy? There is nothing new about this attitude toward Jesus. Men held it in the day of His flesh. He said nothing about democracy when an autocratic Pilate ordered Him to speak of His Kingdom. When a man asked Him about a right division of the inheritance Jesus remained silent and said nothing about wealth and capital. How, then, can He satisfy?

* * * *

This discussion brings us face to face with the more profound question, What is Christianity? Before we can answer the questions about the silence and inadequacy of Jesus we must come to the deeper and more fundamental question, "What did Christ come into this world to do?"

There is no gospel quite so near to the life and ministry of Jesus as the gospel of Mark. It was unquestionably the first record of the ministry of Jesus to be written. Everything in Luke and Matthew you will find in Mark; in the former there are only additions to the second gospel. When Peter was growing old he dictated to Mark the meaning of the ministry of Jesus and the impression that He left upon his life. As he thought over again, in the quiet calm that comes with passing years, just what Christ had come to do and to mean he said this, "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God." That constituted His message and mission. That sentence summarized what Jesus came to do according to the judgment of those who heard Him most frequently and were with Him constantly. He came to a world honeycombed with social ostracism, ecclesiastical acrimony and political intrigue, but He had little to say about these things. He simply went up and down the land

interpreting God to the people. That was His only concern and certainly His only message. As you see Him stand on the quiet hillside of Galilee that memorable day when He preached to multitudes the principles of the Kingdom of God and the meaning of His ministry, in that great manifesto or Magna Charta of the Christian faith, Jesus was forever talking about the entrance into the Kingdom of God. It was seeing God and fellowship with God and companionship with God which marked the burden of His appeal. The constant refrain of His preaching was the proclamation of the gospel of God.

He bore witness to that in His own life. Very early in His days you hear Him say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" God was His only concern. He comes to manhood, and when His disciples fear He may be hungering He turns to them with His telling reply, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, for My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." At the end of His days He climbs His Calvary with a cross that turns not back and He cries out, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit." After the rainfall of twenty centuries men are not altogether agreed about the

meaning of His life. Very opposite opinions are expressed of Him by those who claim they have studied Him, but all mankind in all countries is agreed that Jesus lived a God-conscious life.

In the National Art Gallery in England there is a very noble and dramatic picture of Jesus. As you come upon the painting it seems to be a mere blending of shadows and darkness. Nothing seems to break that unrelieved blackness. As you look closer you see vaguely a cross hid behind a veil of the shadow and the night. But as you come closer and look longer you become strangely aware that there is something more to the picture than mere shadows holding a cross. Behind the cross you see dimly the outlines of a figure with arms outstretched holding that cross, and the agony on the face hid almost by the shadows is much more terrible than the agony on the face of Him who hangs on the cross. That is the picture of what life meant to Jesus. Paul gave it to the world, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." All that Jesus was and did, all that His ministry and words meant to men, had its origin in a God-centered life.

That was His mission and this was His message. He was not a great Titan who did

many things well, He only did one thing: to live a human life flawlessly, and perfectly because it was lived in the keeping of God. He is not remembered for His marvelous ministry of healing or His provision for those in want. These did not constitute His ministry; they were simply expressions of it just as the sunlight is the inevitable expression of the sun. He put God in the center of His own life and He urged men everywhere to that way of life. He preached the Kingdom of God, which is simply the rule of God in the hearts of men. What made His life so great, therefore, was not the number of things He achieved, but the way He lived; not His accomplishments, but His quality of life. Jesus was not uninterested in the world but disinterested in it.

People were always urging Jesus to do things, enter into the world's problem, say something about slavery and militarism, speak on the social, political, and economic problems that seethed in that day. It was the great temptation of Jesus: to turn stones into bread, to throw Himself down from the temple roof and play up to the world, or compromise by the use of material equipment. He met ill-clad people who needed clothing and ill-fed people who needed food and homeless

people who needed homes, and sick people who needed healing. Men said to Him, "Solve these problems and you will set up your kingdom." It still constitutes the supreme temptation of His Church today. Multitudes of people expect the Christian faith to make declaration upon capitalism, slums, birth-control, politics, and humanism, and to this temptation so many times men yield. Jesus felt the press of that temptation, too, but He was silent on these things.

To Him only one thing mattered which would settle all other problems; it was to put God in the center of human life. Radiating from that core of personality there would go influences which would throw light upon all these things which concern us today. The glory of Christ's life rests not in that He told men what to do or avoid, but that He brought men in touch with a quality of life. The world of His time was full of political, social and economic corruption, falling to pieces. Only the rich counted, and common people were but as tools in the hands of unscrupulous masters, pawns in the hands of political chessmen. Into such a world Jesus of Nazareth came. He had no home of His own and never married, but by urging men to put God in the center of life He did more for the

homes of men than all other leaders before or since. He said nothing about art, but His gospel has become the living inspiration of all great art, and when men sought with master genius to put on the canvas some high ideal they turned to Him for inspiration and theme. He said nothing about science, yet ever since His day Christ has inspired men to a quest for truth because He brought God back into the consciousness of men.

So He sent out His disciples. They went everywhere preaching Jesus' way of life, putting God in the center. Mankind laughed at these men, scorned their notions of other worldliness. They had no program, offered no Eldorado, built no Utopia, and yet the world broken in pieces was made whole by them, society was cleansed, laws were changed, political disintegration gave way to world unity, economic injustice gave place to contentment, and war gave place to peace. They put God in the center of life and the whole world was reborn. The sense of God gave men a new enthusiasm for righteousness, a new love for their fellowmen, a new understanding of need, and a new ideal of kingship. Jesus Christ satisfied the world by

getting underneath its surface disturbances to bring God to the heart of men.

* * * *

That is the meaning of the Christian religion. So much criticism is directed toward it because of its other worldliness. It seems to say nothing concerning the modern problems and financial needs of men today. They maintain that all this discussion about God and doctrine can wait. These are after all impractical and of no particular consequence. My friends, even if all these desires of men for the remaking of life in these terms of material satisfactions could be granted, the world would still go to pieces unless it had underneath it and in it an everlasting conviction of the power and presence of God. If the water in a stream trickling from a spring is unwholesome, there is only one ultimate cure: it is to cleanse the spring itself. If bitter waters run through a river, you cannot sweeten them by planting rose bushes on the edges of the river. If the heart is right, nothing will be ultimately wrong; but if the heart is wrong, nothing can be permanently right. If the center of life is sound, the whole life will be pervaded by health. That is in essence the Christian religion, and all other

things that men have counted important are simply fringes of our faith. Being a Christian does not mean becoming a slavish copy of the detail of Jesus' way and walk through the world, but it does mean putting God in the centre of life as Jesus did. When the Christian Church comes back to a new recognition of that ministry it will once more become the master force of the civilization and bring in a better, braver day for the world. We have supposed that Christianity means prescribing to this or that theory of belief, accepting this or that doctrine, rendering this near or that far-off service. We have interpreted discipleship to mean becoming spiritual busybodies running about hither and yon upon some errand, or fighting some cause, or championing some theory until the Christian religion has become burdensome. We have forgotten that the Christian religion is an attempt to put God back in the center of life and the universe. We go off on tangents trying to cure a malady without removing the cause. We must come back to the heart of things. It is to be questioned if a man's ethical conduct is worth having or is safe unless it runs back to the very truth that God is in the center of the universe. A person may go about at a dizzy pace

doing this and leading that cause and yet not be a Christian.

Christianity's message is not primarily to bring men in right relationship to their fellowmen, but to bring men in right relation to God. That is essential. There will be no difficulty about the first when the second is secure and made central. The redemptive touch can only come to the world with a return to that fundamental attitude of religion found in Jesus. A man's creative influence is not measured by the number of things he has done but the quality of his response to life. I believe this constitutes the great need of today. To keep a tree green and growing, something more is needed than the trimming of the branches and the spraying of the leaves; we must feed the roots and nourish the tree at its foundation. When belief in God, the God of Jesus, becomes the center of a man's life he can be trusted with all other things that the world may offer. Humanity can never go far astray if the gospel of God becomes its dominant desire. This was in the mind of Carlyle when he wrote, "A new splendor of God must come to the heart of this industrial age." When the world becomes theocentric, and personality turns around the per-

sonality of the God of Jesus there will be born energies and there will be released influences which will reshape the world.

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What will this attitude of life do for a man? How can this gospel satisfy the world? The glory of the gospel of God lies in the fundamental fact that it does two things: first, it becomes the creative force of his life. Nothing so moulds a man as this sense of God standing at the center of his life. It brings a whole new attitude to the world, and it becomes the changing force of all things that are wrong. When the missionary went out to proclaim this gospel of God to the ends of the earth there were released in the countries in which that gospel was preached forces that forever changed the whole character of the land. When the Sultan of the Turkish Empire was driven into exile by the young Turkish revolt his great complaining bitterness was toward Robert College, which he held responsible for the overthrow of his empire. That was a fine compliment. Wherever Christian faith goes, bringing to men a sense of God, there go unrest and discontent with the existing order.

It is literally true that the Christian religion is the most revolutionary force on earth, and that the criticism of men in the Roman Empire toward the early church was justified when they said, "Ye that set the world upside down." When a man sees God at the center of the world he will not rest day or night until that rule of God becomes dominant in every expression of life. It is the one fundamental basis that lies behind all social reform, material reconstruction, and intellectual splendor. Everything is made new to that man who has placed God in the center of his being. It becomes the only lasting motive for life. Here is a settlement worker who is in great love with her program. She goes about her cases with the professional interest of one who is trying to solve intricate social problems. But what shall keep that worker in her task; shall it be only professional interest, or humanitarianism, or the love of the work, or the rewards that come? Not at all. It is because she sees God in the center of the universe and looks upon life in terms of God, that she gives herself completely, untiringly to her task.

There has been no moulding force in the East and Near East comparable to the influence

of the missionary bringing the gospel of God to its peoples. It brought higher levels of morality to Africa; it ushered in a new era of progress in Turkey; it produced a social revolution in India through the breaking of its castes; it brought a political revolution in China which we are witnessing today and which will one day make of it a great nation; it brought a new intellectual splendor to Egypt and the Near East. These missionaries did not preach socialism or anarchy; they did not demand new laws or political reform. They said nothing of these things. Wherever they went they urged men to make the God of Jesus paramount in their lives, and in two generations they brought an upheaval in the social, economic, and political life of a world which was going to pieces and brought in a new and glorious day. When men love God they will love their fellowmen. When men give dominance to spiritual values they will be slaves neither to money, nor institutions, nor to men. The Christian era launched the birth of freedom. The Christian religion is the most revolutionary force in the world because it demands that men take account of God in the world.

You see the evidence of that in the world of Jesus' day. Do you know that the Greek spoken

by the people of Jesus' country was simply a poor colloquial language, just a mixture of Hebrew and Greek? It was a Mediterranean dialect of the Greek. Scholars scoffed at it in that day because it was artless. It was the common belief that only the pure, classic Greek of scholars and poets would survive. No one dreamed that the classical literature of Greece would ever be forgotten and not one in a million supposed that the Greek dialect of the Mediterranean spoken by the followers of Jesus of Nazareth would ever survive that generation. But look today. Only an occasional scholar knows something of that old classic Greek, while the language of the disciples of Jesus is known and remembered through the earth for all time. The New Testament is the triumph of an art created by the simple belief in God. The things that God touches always become eternal and abiding.

I recall that day standing on the threshold of a little home of a village in Lanarkshire, Scotland. It was a very small and humble home where one day years ago a family arose early in the morning to bid farewell to a son. After a frugal meal of porridge and bread a young man named David read the One Hundred and Twenty-First Psalm, offered a prayer, and

trudged over a muddy road to Glasgow, where he took ship for Africa. The years pass, and David Livingstone, out of that humble home, was found dead on his knees by his hand-made cot in a little hut of the long grass jungle country of Illala. The natives of the village carried his body one thousand two hundred miles over river and mountain and through jungles of an enemy country until one day it was lowered in the tomb in Westminster Abbey. Last summer I stood before that grave and I wondered by what process one could argue from a birth so humble to a grave so glorious. Then I remembered what David Livingstone had written across his life, "I put no value on anything I possess save in terms of the Kingdom of God." It was the creative force of the gospel of God Jesus preached which made all that change in his life, sending him from a cradle so ordinary to a tomb so resplendent.

When a man believes in God, clear to the hilt, with all his heart, there comes to him a power which no temptation can imperil, which no experience can impeach; he will write as if an angel directed his hand; he will sing as if the invisible choirs warbled in his soul. When God stands at the center of life man can change any-

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thing. When men see God in the heart of the universe all men will matter and all souls have a place.

Not only will this dominant sense of God transform life, but it will also simplify religion. How burdensome our faith is becoming. The very spirit of religion is so enshrouded, encased, and embalmed in mere words and empty phrases that we are losing its very heart. Many of us can not hear the still small voice for the rattling of ecclesiastical machinery. There are those to whom religion means endless recital of creeds, mere genuflexions, intellectual surrenders, a dizzy going about, always doing something. That was not the religion which Jesus came to teach. He made it much simpler than this. Religion is simply the binding of the soul back upon God and the committal of life to a Divine Will. All other things may have their place but are secondary. They lie on the fringes but not at the heart. We are so apt to interpret religion in terms of laws, and labor, and regulations, and ceremonies, forgetful that the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached involves placing the rule of God in the hearts of men. That is what an early disciple had in mind when he wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ

Jesus." This is the simple test of all faith. When God is in the center of the world you can trust the world, and when God has become dominant in life you can trust life. We are not islands floating in a sea of uncertainty; we are joined to the mainland of God's love.

Quite recently Ernest Dowsett wrote a book often quoted today, and it has a peculiar bearing upon that of which we have been thinking today. It tells the story of an elderly minister who was visiting his parish in the highlands of Scotland. One day he went out to visit a family not identified with the kirk but which he was seeking to bring into it. He came upon the old Scot's farmhouse and found everything in order. There was an attractiveness about the exterior; it was so well ordered and well kept. The minister of the kirk wondered if the house within was as well ordered and gave as much promise as did the surroundings of the home. So he went to the door, greeted the woman who met him, and asked in his humble way, "Madam, does Jesus live here?" She was rather startled by that question and in great surprise repeated it, "Does Jesus live here?" When the old Scotch minister received no answer he walked away and went on his journey. The woman at once left the

door, rushed to one of the barns where her husband was chopping wood and related this unusual inquiry of the stranger at the door. The husband replied, "Did you not tell him that we go to church; and did you not tell him we put something into the collection every Sunday?" The woman stood looking wistfully at her husband and replied, "It wasn't anything like that, he wanted to know, John; he wanted to know if Christ lived here, and that's different." You who hear my voice have your well-kept gardens of honesty and piety full of flowers of kindness and goodwill. Your barns are bulging with great harvests of belief and opinion. Your life is well ordered. A deeper and more searching question fronts you today: Does God live in your life?

"Then come to my heart Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee."

VI

THE VINDICATION

of

THE KINGDOM

THE VINDICATION OF THE KINGDOM

MARK 2:12—*"They were all amazed and glorified God."*

THIS EPISODE marks a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. Something happened to Him here which forever altered the whole course of His life. Up to this time He had been heralded and haloed; from now on He is hated and hissed. When the story opens He is a national hero; when it closes He is a racial outcast. Somewhere between the opening and the closing of the story His popularity gives place to oppression; crowds change to curses; fascination for Him turns to a disregard of Him; and hysteria becomes hate. It is true that all during His life men fought a guerilla warfare with Him but from now on the conflict is in the open, destined never to end until cruel mobs sent Him to a most disgraceful death and stretched Him upon a cross. From now on the lines are drawn and swords are crossed.

Sitting in a humble home Jesus met by appointment a company of leading ecclesiastics of His day. It was not just a mob that met Him

in this home; it was a selected group of the religious leaders of Palestine. There they sit, this imposing array of religious sybarites, cool, stern, unfriendly and unsympathetic, jealous for their prerogative. They had come to have it out with Him.

The question under discussion turned on the authority of Jesus. They determined to know what right He had to make the claims He did and how He could prove His statements. They asked Him: "How do you know that what you say is true? What right have you to make the claims you propose? What proof have you to present that you are what you claim to be? How can you vindicate your mission and where lies the validity of your claim?"

Strange enough that question is being asked again. Any modern student of religion knows that the question which is asked of the Christian church is this old question of the pharisees: "How can you vindicate your claim? What proof can you present for your authority? Wherein lies the validity of your enterprise?" In the dark hour of his life Carlyle stood one afternoon by the edge of a lonely grave that was being filled. The minister had just finished the reading of those words that have swung hope and heart into many a distracted life: "Let

not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Hardly had he finished reading when Carlyle looked toward the setting sun and half musing said, "What do you know about it more than we do, if you are not the Son of God?" That question is being asked again today. And not always with a friendly approach. Many times it is asked by those who regard religion as an outworn trumpery. They will admit that once upon a time religion had a place but now that we know so much, it has ceased to function. Here and there, they maintain, you will find a man who still believes in the validity of religion—some small town business man who holds to it for the same reason that a politician kisses a baby—just to stand high in the esteem of men. They affirm that religion is largely discredited except by a small group of men who wear coats like undertakers and women with birds in their hats, who are still hypnotized by the importance of its claim. But for the rest, it has ceased to function. "What right has Christ to claim our obedience and allegiance? Where does the Christian religion get its authority?" I read a book on astronomy but I grow tired of reading about the stars and close the book. I read a book on botany but I am sur-

feited with a description of flowers and walk away from the book. I read a book on geology but I grow weary of rocks and turn to something else. I open the New Testament, and why can I not walk away from it or close it at will? What right has it to claim my allegiance?

There is nothing new in all this. The modern world is hiding its moral laxity behind the skirts of endless debate. We are sitting once more with that cynical group of ecclesiastical leaders saying to Jesus, "How can you vindicate your claim?" Religion is having a hard time of it. Perhaps it is good that this hour has come. We ought to be in the position to give an account of the faith that is in us.

* * * *

Then something happened and you come upon the second episode of the story. In that day a humble home was of one story. The walls were perhaps twelve feet high, made of mud. Across the top of the walls they laid rafters and across these they placed poles and branches and sod or rubble. As the debate grew more intense and bitter suddenly the room became filled with dust and bits of rubble began falling from the roof. They looked up and behold the sod and rubble were displaced, the poles and rafters

were pushed back and four men were lowering, on an improvised cot, a tortured sick man in the presence of Jesus. He was obviously brought there to be healed; just a poor paralytic with shrunken muscles and swollen joints full of pain, helpless in limb and speech. Utterly indifferent now to the debate and unconcerned about the argument, Jesus looked into the sick man's face and said, "Have courage, thy sins are forgiven."

May I halt a moment to bring to your attention an interesting aside? "And when He saw their faith He said unto him, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'." How much we owe to the loyalty of others! The reconstruction of this man came not from his own will but from a determination of his friends. It was because He was impressed by their faith that Jesus healed this man. Men became great and rich because at a critical moment in life some friend carried them in their hopes. To be sure there are those whose dreams have been wrecked by carping criticism but many more have come to high venture and accomplishment because somewhere in the past someone had faith in them and said, "Oh heart, fight on." How much we owe to the faith of others. "And Jesus seeing their faith"—

* * * *

No sooner had these words been spoken than pandemonium broke loose. The debate which was already sharp now became bitter . Above the confusion, gesticulation and rapid fire talking a voice rang out, "What right have you to forgive sins. Where do you get your authority to make this statement? How can you vindicate your claim? What proof have you that you can forgive sin?"

Then Jesus said, "I will make this a test." I will heal this man and ask him to arise, take up his bed and walk. If he arises I will be vindicated. If he cannot arise I will be discredited. My vindication will rest upon this man's conduct. What he does and how he acts will either vindicate or discredit me." Jesus was willing to stake His reputation upon the conduct of this man. "But that he may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins he saith unto the sick of the palsy, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk'." That was a daring thing to do. Jesus was willing to risk His reputation upon the conduct of one man.

Oh, you say, the man had to arise, there was nothing else for him to do because Jesus had called him. Not at all. When the muscles were released and the ache which he had carried throughout his whole life suddenly left him,

he might well have said, "Oh, give me peace a moment because now for the first time I am without pain." Or again, he might have been too embarassed to arise, or again he might easily have refused to arise because he knew this ecclesiastical court was intolerant of Jesus and he feared the wrath of the rabbis toward him. The more you think about this man, the more one becomes impressed with the daring of Jesus. But at once he arose, leaped to his feet and packing his blankets on his back, walked out. That was the end of the matter. The interview ceased. There was nothing more they could say; they had accepted the challenge and they had lost. Jesus had been vindicated by a man made over. It made a profound impression and there they go, these sleek sybarites, slinking through the narrow village streets to their own homes and communities. Jesus had been vindicated.

Behind that simple story lies a challenging truth. The vindication of the Kingdom of God is in the character of those who are its witnesses. The final apologetic for the Christian religion is the conduct of those who embrace it. The unanswerable argument of Christian faith is an upright life, lived without fear or flaw before the eyes of men. The vindication of the Kingdom of God rests not upon arguments but upon

life made over. What a challenging truth it is and how much is at stake in one man's conduct in the Kingdom of Heaven!

* * * *

That is true in other aspects of life as well. All great movements are vindicated or discredited by the conduct of those who are touched by them. An enterprise is either valid or void in proportion as it affects for uprightness those who give their allegiance to it.

Take it in the realm of government. When the Revolutionary War ended, reconstruction followed with all its tangled uncertainty and anxious misgivings. The great debate was on whether or no a self-governing people could last and whether democracy could be vindicated. De Tocqueville and Matthew Arnold cried out with arguments against the permanence of democracy. In every community the debate was on. At last it was settled, not by argument, but by the influence which democracy had upon the lives of those who were committed to it. Mazzini, the Italian statesman, spoke a profound truth when he said, "If you want to know the character of any government, watch its effect upon people at the bottom." On that basis the argument was settled and democracy

stands because its unanswerable argument is the prosperity and happiness of people who embrace it. Our government was established and vindicated, not by the wealth it gave or the prosperity it brought but the contentment it produced in the souls of its citizens.

What is true in the realm of government is also true in the realm of influence. A man's life is vindicated in proportion as he influences for good those who come close to his heart. Your worth to society does not rest upon the money you leave or the books you write or the paintings you have created, but rather by the wholesomeness of your influence upon others. The vindication of life rests on its transforming influence upon others. One day the biographer of Frederick Robertson, one of England's great prophets, was visiting in Brighton to discover some information about the great English preacher. He spent several days there but was disappointed to find nothing new. As he was leaving Brighton he walked down a narrow street where he chanced to see a cobbler's shop and walked inside wondering if he could come upon some new anecdote of Robertson's life. When he asked the old cobbler if he knew Robertson his face lit up and he pointed the biographer to a picture of Robertson hanging on

the wall of his shop. With tears on his cheeks he said, "Every time I am tempted I look into the face of Robertson and he won't let me do wrong. That was the vindication of the great preacher's life and the unanswerable argument of the validity of his career. It was what was in the mind of Mrs. Robert Browning when she wrote of one she loved:

"The face of all the world has changed
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
More still and still behind me as it stole
Betwixt me and the outer brink of obvious death,
Where I who thought to sink, was caught up into love
And taught the whole of life in a new rhythm."

* * * *

So it is preeminently in the realm of faith. The debate of religion is on. As never before men are discussing it and asking for its validity. They are looking for a vindication of the Christian enterprise by comparing it with other religions of the world. We have forgotten that the superiority of the Christian religion rests not in its creed, for other religions have creeds as well. It is not to be based upon worship for there is worship and ritual in other faiths too. It is not to be vindicated because it has a Bible; every religion has a bible or holy

book. It is not to be vindicated by its gorgeous cathedrals; for there are temples in the non-Christian world that still stagger the imagination of men's minds. The vindication of the Christian religion rests not in these things, but rather in life transformed and conduct made radiant.

That was Christ's method and message. He staked His reputation upon His influence over those who loved Him. The validity of His claim turned on the conduct of His disciples. Jesus never defended Himself. He never plead His own cause. That is a pitiful scene you have in the Roman Praetorium when Pilate asked Him many questions concerning His faith and Jesus answered never a word. He could not, because His vindication rests not upon external things but in lives transformed. We say, and that correctly, "I must rise or fall on my own record." Jesus said, "I must rise or fall on your record." He was always saying to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world," "Ye are the salt of the earth," "Ye are my witnesses." When John sent an emissary to Jesus saying, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another," Jesus replied, "Go tell John the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the poor have the gospel

preached unto them." The validity of His claims turned on the conduct of those who were touched by His presence. When the religious leaders asked the blind man who Jesus was, his simple answer was, "This I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." He vindicated Jesus in a life that was made over.

That was ever the message of the apostles. Peter and John in prison were brought before a prejudiced court, but so noble was their bearing and so upright their behaviour that "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The glory of the apostolic band turns on this vindication. They were not rich; they had no great influence; they were not intellectually keen; they had no social prestige, but they vindicated Christ in the way they lived and walked among men. He saw in them the travail of His soul and was satisfied. They were selfish and He made them generous; they were weak and He made them strong; they were intolerant and He made them loving; they were provincial and He gave them a world vision; they were skeptical and He made them believing. One man said, "I see by Him"; another added, "I am cleansed through Him"; a third said, "I

walk by Him" and another responded, "I live by Him." They vindicated Jesus in their conduct.

* * * *

We need that lesson today. The vindication of the Kingdom of God rests upon the character of the disciples. We are trying to defend religion today. That is well enough, but the question is, "What arguments shall we present?" I recall a university student coming to me in my library asking for a book on Christian apologetics. When I asked him what he wanted the book for, he assured me that some students were coming to him with an argument which he wanted to be in a position to answer. That was a very noble venture. But the question arises, "What is the unanswerable argument of the Christian religion?" It is not a sword, but a sympathy; it is not a club, but character; it is not a debate, but a demonstration; it is not a syllogism, but a smiling soul; it is not logic, but life. Too often we have tried to vindicate Christian faith by all manner of theological niceties and hair-splittings on the tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum of doctrinal contention. I know men who can argue every theological doctrine to a finesse but I would not trust them with a nickel. No, my friends, the

vindication of the Christian religion rests not in the realm of intellect but in conduct; not in mental acumen but moral passion; not in the things of the mind but in spiritual discernment. By the way you carry yourself through the day, the light in your eye, the love in your dealing, Jesus of Nazareth rises or falls. The finest contribution you can make to Christian apologetics is to live an upright life, blameless, sympathetic and understanding. "Not he that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' but he that doeth My will."

That constitutes the glory of Christian discipleship. The humblest and the lowest may provide the unanswerable argument for the Kingdom of God. Sometimes we say, "My life is so drab, my duty is so commonplace, and the path of my life is so narrow, what possible contribution can I make to the Kingdom of God and how can I help its advance?" We have apparently forgotten that there is no life so drab which cannot vindicate Him in conduct. There is no path so gray in which we cannot provide the unanswerable argument for the Kingdom of God. Every life has its place. Youth can vindicate the hope of Jesus, old age the patience of Jesus and in mature years the sense of duty. The final apologetic for the Christian enterprise

is a Christian life and that is within the reach and challenge of every one to live.

It also constitutes a very sober fact. What makes sin so grievous and dark in the Kingdom of Heaven is that it discredits Christ. We are mirrors to reflect His love and life to the world but if the mirror is blurred or stained it cannot reflect the full image of the Son of God and someone in this world has a false view of Him.

The tragedy of sin is not that you wrong yourself, but that you stigmatize Jesus. In the evil that you do, the world will think less of Jesus and He goes without vindication. In your life Jesus is either crowned or crucified. The vindication of the Kingdom of Heaven lies in the conduct of its witnesses and if that conduct is unbecoming, then Jesus of Nazereth fails in the validity of His claims. In the wrong that you do, you make it harder for men to believe in God and more difficult for Christ to vindicate His claims to the world.

In the last analysis it all comes back to this: What kind of a Christ are you living before the world. Is your life so holy; are you so free from hate; is there in you such a concern for others; are you so willing to forgive that seeing you, men shall come to Christ with a new com-

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pelling? Do you vindicate or discredit Jesus? Do you validate or invalidate the faith of the fathers? What will be the world's conception of Jesus as it watches you walking down the streets of life?

In the heart of old Boston there stands this glorious trysting place for wearied hearts: Trinity Church and before it is the simple statue of Phillips Brooks. There he stands intently looking toward the multitudes that pass by. His face is lit up with a deep love and his hand is outstretched in eternal benediction. Behind his statue you see Christ standing with a cross. That is a beautiful memorial to the reality and the glory of the life of Phillips Brooks. When men looked into his face they knew that Jesus of Nazereth was vindicated.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

VII

THE DANGER

to

THE KINGDOM

THE DANGER TO THE KINGDOM

Acts 10:19—*"And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Three men seek thee.'"*

THERE IS AN OLD-WORLD fascination about Jaffa, prosperous city of modern Palestine. It stands shimmering on the edge of the blue Mediterranean while in its harbor a hundred ships ride at anchor awaiting cargoes of fruit for the western world, for Jaffa is the center of the olive, grape, and orange industry of the modern Zionist colony. But its fascination is not only in the present but in the past. It was to this city that Jonah fled when the Almighty had called him to proclaim judgment to the city of Nineveh. It was to the harbor of Jaffa that King Solomon floated the rafts of cedar wood from the mountains of Lebanon and then carried them on camel-back to the city of Jerusalem.

Now in the dawn of the Christian era on a winding road following the shore line there stood a humble home made of four mud walls painted white with lime whose walls rose twenty

feet. From the street level to the flat roof a narrow creaking stairway was built which the family of an outcast, Simon the Tanner, climbed at eventide to rehearse the gossip of the village street and talk about the happenings of the day. It came to pass that Peter, apostle of the Lord, was a guest in this humble man's home, and after his custom at about the sixth hour went to the roof top to pray. As he prayed the Heavens opened and a vessel was let down out of the sky as a sheet fastened in four corners in which were all manner of beasts and fowl. Then came the voice, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," to which the apostle responded as if piqued, "I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Then came the vision the second time with the voice from Heaven, "Call not common what God hath cleansed." So it was repeated the third time.

That scene is altogether strange and weird to us. To our prosaic and unromantic minds it seems to have no meaning. There is such an utter absence of poetry and imagery in the world of the west that these visions of oriental life seem well nigh unbelievable. But Peter had no difficulty in understanding the meaning of the vision. He lived in an oriental world in which men

spoke in visions, talked in dreams and philosophized through imagery. It was a day when men supposed each nation had its own deity and each race its god. Men believed their gods exclusive, and all others anathema. Now the Gentile world was indiscriminate in the eating of the flesh of bird or beast while the Jews made definite selections, until this simple fact became a matter of religious belief. The god of Israel would not permit them to eat the unclean meat and for that reason God must frown upon all Gentiles. Then came the vision which struck the death knell of exclusiveness, an object lesson to a new and deepened faith. It was as if God said, "I do not see men in groups or separate them by the barbed wire entanglements of suspicion. I have made of one blood all nations and the families of earth live under one roof in which all have a place and meaning. The oneness of nations is not based on belief or blood but on a common need. Bond and free, Greek and Jew stretch out their hands to Me."

It is still so today. There are three prevailing attitudes concerning the religions of mankind. The first maintains that all religions are wrong. Religion is but a bundle of bigotry and sheaf of superstition, an opiate to dull the

sense of personal worth. That is the voice of atheism. A second prevailing attitude claims that all religions are right. Each religion is suited to the times and peoples among which it prevails. All faiths are on a parity and we have no right to change any man's religion. That is the voice of humanism. There is a third attitude. It assumes that all religions are wrong except my own; that all men are in error except the man who makes the statement. We have the record of twelve dead religions. There are in the world today eleven living religions, five of which were born in one century; but all these are false save one.

How we need the vision that came to Peter on a Jaffa house top! God has made us all to be His children. He does not pigeonhole races and peoples. Each life means something to Him, and we are all pilgrims. All the gates of the Eternal City are open on all sides day and night, and God is no respecter of persons. In the heart of mankind throughout all ages there has been a wistful longing after Him which will never be in vain. Just as a garden is not a garden unless it has a variety of flowers so in the family of nations by many ways can men express their love of God. A religion that is vital and dynamic

has nothing to lose but much to gain by contact with other religions. You do not have to isolate truth to make it safe. We must come to a new vision of the sense of comradeship of all peoples of all faiths in the pilgrimage to God.

* * * *

But it is not the vision itself that is so significant. I am not thinking today about the character or meaning of that vision but rather the relation of that vision to life. "And while Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said to him, 'Three men seek thee.' " While he was yet on his knees and the flame still burned in his soul there came a knock at the gate, and a voice called, "Three men seek thee." It seems rather a thoughtless thing to do, indeed we would almost call it rude. The prophet should not have been disturbed in this glorious light. No man had a right to break in on the apostle in such a dream. Rather he should have been left alone. Fancy a bride standing before the altar, and thrilled by the romance of the moment, rudely disturbed by a maid to announce she is wanted on the telephone. It is as if a man dreaming about holiday times in high mountains and on the lakes suddenly hears his alarm clock ring. Fancy a man

holding in his arms for the first time his firstborn son, and while looking into that face is told that a book agent wants to see him. Try to think back to that setting. Wrapped up in the ecstatic wonder and strangeness of it all, and still upon his knees, someone calls up, "Three men stand at the gate seeking thee."

And it wasn't mere chance. You can not say it was a mere coincidence that at this particular moment three strangers should be seeking him. The Spirit made the announcement. God had sent these men in that very hour to Peter. It was not, therefore, a mere accident; it was intended. It was as if God said to him, "You must link that vision to some duty. Now that you have seen the light you must do something about it." It is always a dangerous thing for a man to be ready if he never gets beyond it. We are always in danger of divorcing dreams from deeds, revelations from responsibilities, visions from duties, commissions from consecrations. We see the open Heavens but we do not see the open gate. We hear the voice of God but we do not hear the voice of need.

My friends, what a truth that is. The world is full of people who know the truth but do not relate it to life; who see the open heavens but

who do nothing with it. Now it is true that visions always come before duties. Before God gives a man a great responsibility He begins by giving him a great revelation. Before Moses is called to lead Israel, in a flaming acacia bush the voice of God comes to him; before Isaiah phophesies to the nation, the fire of God burns on his tongue; before Abraham tramps the lonely waste places, God had met him; before Paul goes to his ministry, he has a Damascus vision; before Christ sent out His disciples they hear Him say, "All power is given unto me"; before the Christian Church is born in an upper room a company of His disciples see the vision resplendent; before the soldiers have the courage to stand knee-deep in the muddy trenches of Flanders, the vision of a better world enheartens them. Every life has first its revelation.

But the danger is that many never get beyond it. Some time ago I stood with a friend in the foothills of Pennsylvania watching a swift stream hurl itself precipitately over a sharp waterfall. We both stood entranced by this churning, thundering water as it swept by on its way to a great river and then to the open sea. After a long silence I said to my friend, who was an engineer, "What are you thinking about?" After

a little he replied, "What a waste of power this. This stream harnessed could light the homes of the peasant people of these hills, could drive their machinery and lift untold burdens from their prosaic lives. What could be done for the cities below if only this energy were harnessed, but it seemingly comes to nothing." And I have thought again and again of people equipped, efficient, full of energy and talent who never harness their gifts to the needs of the world. They have personality, charm, culture, faith, but it is unrelated to life and it comes to naught. They are always ready but they never assume a duty. Always sowing seed but never gathering harvest; always refining gold but never beating it into a crown; always mixing colors but never painting a picture; always making plans but never constructing a building. The world is full of architects; it has few builders. And yet mighty accomplishments could be theirs if only they related their dreams to deeds and their visions to duties. They might have enriched the world and immortalized their names. With a vision of God, Dante saw the open gate of a world in need and gave it his "Divine Comedy." Envisaged by the splendor of his dream Millet saw the open gate and gave the world an

"Angelus," Michael Angelo a "Moses," and Titian a "Christ." These men stood between their revelations and their responsibilities. How startling is that parable of the judgment which Jesus gave to His disciples: "When saw we thee . . . and did not minister?" Jesus put seeing and ministering, revelation and responsibility, visions and duties side by side. It is always a dangerous thing to be ready and do nothing about it.

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You see the danger of being ready in the world of business. The other day I tried to make a purchase in a nearby shop. The store was open and the clerks were standing behind the counter when I expressed my desire to buy a certain article. I was greeted very politely with the reply that it was first necessary at the opening of the day to take account of the materials on the shelves and make an inventory of the articles of sale, and therefore I could buy nothing until that had been done. They were so busy getting ready for business that they had no time left to do business. A very prominent surgeon said to me not so long ago, "The danger of my profession is that I shall become so interested in writing the

history of the case, securing equipment and instruments, that patients die from sheer neglect." It is the danger of getting ready. How many business enterprises are going into bankruptcy because they spend all their time in getting a system and arranging for the overhead until there is no time or energy left to make sales.

It is so in our national life. In the last ten months we produced 48,000,000 tons of steel. We sent our supplies over the railroads of the land in 45,000,000 freight cars. We have built 4,500,000 motor cars. We have sowed 6,000,000 acres of wheat, and 98,000,000 acres of corn. We have invested over $10,000,000,000 in insurance. We have spent $5,000,000,000 for construction of buildings. But the question arises, what are we going to do with it and what will all this lead to? We are getting ready, but for what?

You come upon this danger in the realm of education. Dr. Rufus Jones, that fine Quaker scholar and the most accurate interpreter of the modern world from the Christian point of view, said that the danger of present day education is found in the fact that we are forever card indexing truth and filing it away in proper pigeonholes, cataloguing our information and then

walking away from it. We know enough; we do nothing with it. I remember walking one day last summer over the quadrangle of New College at Oxford with a very distinguished American student. He had obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from his own college; then at an eastern university had earned his Master's degree, and three years later had obtained from another university of New England a Doctor of Philosophy degree. When I asked him what he was doing he said he was trying to secure a Doctor of Law degree. When I asked further what he was planning to do with his life and what investment he expected to make of it he told me that he had not the slightest idea. He was 38 years of age; he was ready but he was doing nothing. It is not the want of knowledge from which the world is suffering today but a want of relating that knowledge to life. The Heavens are opened but we do not see the three men standing at the gate.

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What is true in the world of business and education is pre-eminently true in religion. The haunting problem of religious life today is that those who have come to a vision of God shall

fail to relate it to life. So many times we are like the man in the parable who said, "'I go, Sir.' But he went not." We guard and keep for ourselves what is meant for the world. In these moments of spiritual exaltation and religious unfolding we say as did the rich man in the parable, "I will build greater barns to store my surplus harvests. Soul, take thine ease." We have visions of God, light breaks upon our horizons, the Heavens seem radiant and open to us, but we never get beyond the vision. Avarice, whether in spiritual possessions or in material treasures, is always a poison and danger. On the Mountain of Transfiguration when Peter, James and John beheld the vision of the God of Jesus, and heard the voice that called Him to a holy task, they said: "It is good for us to be here. Let us build three tabernacles," never thinking of the paralytic lad in the valley who needed healing.

Religion today is suffering desperately from those who never relate it to life or harness it to a great task. To many people it is only form and words and customs. In the medieval church priests chanted their Pater Nosters and in richly embroidered robes they kneeled before golden altars and said, "Hoc est corpus." The people

of that day, wistful in their search after God, stood before these altars and heard that chant. But that worship was not related to life. The revelation of the priests had no bearing upon every-day living. By and by when the priests chanted the refrain, "Hoc est corpus," people stood aside, and in mocking mimicry said "Hokus Pokus" and laughed. It was religion which had lost sight of the stranger standing at the open gate that sickened men of the Church.

Most of the bitter criticism hurled by cynics at the Christian Church and the Christian religion lies just here. We live through glorious moments of unfolding when golden sunbeams round us play, when life is lifted to higher levels, shadows fall and light breaks. No decent man can quarrel with that experience or find fault with it. They, too, wistfully long for that vision sublime. But what galls men is that so little comes out of that vision. The Christian has come to an understanding but he never shares it with the ignorant; he has the light but is unwilling to carry it into darkness; he is given silver tools but fails to build, therewith, the Kingdom of God; he is given balm but never uses it for the world's healing. There is so much suffering that could be relieved, tears that could

be wiped away, pain that could be assuaged, wounds that might be healed if we but related our visions to our duties, our revelations to our responsibilities. Believe me, my friends, the lofty ideals of Jesus are a great danger to a man unless they are applied. We must come to transform anew our definitions into discipleships, our discernment of religion to a demonstration of it, our arguments to allurements. We must gear the things of Heaven into the life of the world. Once more there must come the voice of Him who said, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only," or again, "Not he that saith, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth my will."

* * * *

That was the glory of Jesus. He always stood between His visions and His duties. You meet Him on the mountain praying one night and the next day He relieves the hunger of the multitudes. He goes to loneliness for meditation but in a few hours you see Him saving a ship that is foundering in the storm. He becomes conscious of God's presence and that He would return to Him, but a moment later He takes a towel, girds His loins and washes His disciples'

feet. He meets His Father face to face on the Mountain of the Transfiguration and in the next hour He heals a paralytic lad. So it was in the life of Paul. He met the vision divine on the way to Damascus, and his first words were, "What wouldst thou have me do?" The vision of God breaks upon him on the shore of Asia and the next day he follows the man of Macedonia, carrying His gospel into Europe. The glorious vision of the Resurrection breaks over him with an unforgettable splendor and in I Corinthians 15 he portrays that vision; but the first word of the 16th Chapter is, "Now about the collection?" He was forever standing between his revelation and his responsibilities, between the open Heaven and the three men standing at the closed gate.

* * * *

In the last analysis that is the test of all true religion. Life has its glorious revealings. There are hours when we say with Renan, "O God, if there be a God, when will it be worth while to live?" But there are other moments too and with ever recurring frequency when we seem to see the stars shine upon us and we chant Coleridge's hallelujah, "O God, how glorious

it is to live." We open the book, we look through the telescope, we see friends, we meet with unfoldings, and the vision resplendent breaks upon us while we are on our knees. But we do nothing about it. So often when men grow old they become cynical and critical toward religion. They are fed up with reform and improvement. In their early days they had enthusiasm because the Heavens were opened, visions came, and light broke. But now in their old age they are dulled, disenchanted and disillusioned. And why is that so? Because they never harnessed their dreams to deeds or their revelations to an enterprise of service.

You come here Sunday after Sunday, year after year, and the burdens of life are lifted. You see more clearly, walk more steadfastly, believe more deeply, but it comes to nothing. You are always getting ready but never get beyond it. My friends, that is what is killing religion today. There are enough religious people to alter the economic, social and political failings of the day but we do nothing about it. There are pitiful social maladjustments existing because somebody will not play up his part; there are economic tragedies about us because those whom God has prepared to meet these needs will not

face up to the task; there are spiritual dilemmas under which men live because someone to whom God has given a vision will not share it with the broken in heart. We do not need more religion but more application of religion to the men standing at the gate of our lives. I have learned that such people always quarrel about religion and its terminology while the people who relate religion to life are always friendly and hopeful in their outlook. That was the meaning of Jesus when He said, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only." The visions of God are unsafe unless they are harnessed to life.

There is an old story of a painter who settled one summer in a New England village determined that at the right moment he would paint a sunset over the New England hills. Friends in the village were greatly interested in his project and watched for an early autumn day which would provide a perfect setting for the canvas. Then a day came when the heavens were clear, the sky was of azure blue, and the painter walked to a hilltop to paint the sunset. It was going on to sundown time when they arrived. The painter adjusted his easel with great care and apparent leisure when his friends warned him that the sun would soon set. Then he stretched the can-

vas on the frame indifferent to the passing moments when the friend repeated, "Will you never begin?" Then he adjusted his own stool, trimmed his brushes with great care and again came the warning of friends. Then he mixed his paints and again the friends said, "Will you never begin?" Indifferent to their pleading, at last he sat down on his stool before his canvas ready to begin the painting. He looked to the western sky but the sun had set, the radiance had gone and his chance at the vision had passed.

It is like that in life. Over the welter and woe of the world's misery and wistfulness, a world that is standing as stood the three men at the gate, waiting for your word of hope and enheartenment, the Son of God cries out to all to whom the vision has come and over whose souls the light has broken saying, "Will you never begin?"

"And now that you have heard the voice,
And listened to the world of choice;
Now that the stars look down upon you,
What is the work that you will do?
What lofty life, what valiant deed,
Ashine with splendor and with speed;
Do something, my beloved, to be fit,
The offspring of the Infinite."

VIII

THE PRESENCE

in

THE KINGDOM

THE PRESENCE IN THE KINGDOM

MARK 1:41—*"And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him."*

THERE ARE TWO fundamental considerations which confront men in their attitude to religion. The practical atheism of today turns on two questions: Is there a God, and, is that God interested in His world? The misgivings which haunt many are born from the uncertainty in the power of God and in the concern of God. There is among many the fear that God is as unconcerned as he is helpless. We seem to make our way alone through the world, either because God is powerless or because he has lost contact.

Of these two fundamental considerations the second, I believe, is the most dominant and intense: Unbelief in the concern of God. Men seem to think he does not stand by. We are repeating the dictum of Carlyle, "God's in his world and does nothing about it." The result is that many affirm atheism is a more satisfactory explanation for the universe than a world of organized heartbreaks. It is obviously less

difficult to pass through an earth in which God is helpless than one in which God won't help.

Life is not an easy thing to live or to explain. Take it in the world at large. As you look out upon the restlessness of earth you see a tangled, tasseled mass of confusion and disorder. Races and peoples are not united but live in cruel isolation, constant distress and bitter antagonisms. The gulf which separates the rich from the poor, the privileged from the unprivileged, the educated from the lowbred is deep and resistant. There is all too painful evidence in the world of man's inhumanity to man. There seems to be no God to care or concern himself with that fact. Then too, we are baffled by the inexplicable structure of the universe; suffering and crises and human disappointments that make men cry out in the night of fear, "Oh God, if there be a God, Why?" Life has its unfulfilled prophecies. In the far frozen regions of the Arctic where the driven snows beat and ice piles high there is a lonely cairn before which is planted a white cross. On that cross in letters of black men once painted these words, "To dream, to seek, to find and not yet to attain." It is the cross before the snow cairn where the heroic British adventurer, Captain Scott, lies dead. How often it happens

that this sentiment is the only possible summary of human life! We can't have what we want and everywhere men are suffering from hopes deferred and blasted expectations. In the last analysis, behind the fretting haste of life, the eager scramble after money, the furious attempts to guarantee the future and insure coming days, is the heartaching fear that no one is concerned. Men are fearful that God has no time or no power or no interest in his creation, at least not enough to provide for them. He is either an indifferent spectator or the reins have slipped out of his hands.

Take life as it is—looking the facts squarely in the face, not as you would like them, but as they are—can you say that God is interested? If we cast our cares upon Him does He care for us?

* * * *

What answer has religion to that question? Is it possible to square the facts of life with the faith of Jesus? Can you gear-in the belief in the love of God, which is the cardinal principle of our holy religion, with these desperate forces that play through human life? What has Jesus

of Nazareth to say to this misgiving of men? May I think of that with you today?

* * * *

This is a graphic story we have before us. There is no more abject spectacle of misery and pain in all the world than a leper. He may not live in his own home with his own people. Forced from the boundaries of his own little village, compelled to eke out his own miserable existence, untouched by the consolations of religion, these white scarred souls live by the roadside in unbelievable squalor, filth and degradation. As people pass up and down the highway they are compelled to step off the road and call out, "Unclean, Unclean." There is no hope for them but in death and no relief for their misery but in Heaven. For sheer despair, darkness and misery there is no parallel in the world.

As Jesus came down from the mountain this leper met him. But what was he to do? Both the leper and Jesus would violate every code of religion and hygiene if their garments touched in passing. I fancy that if we had been there we would have said, "Poor wretch, I have just finished preaching a message of hope," (for Jesus had just ended his sermon on the Mount

according to Matthew when this incident occurred) "you should have been on time for the sermon, but church is out." Perhaps we might even have paused before the man and tossed off fragments and bits of the sermon which might be best suited to this man's case and then with a glib, "Cheerio," sent him on in his unbroken misery. Not so Jesus of Nazereth. He did not debate why he came upon this vague disease. He did not sit down to write a novel on social conditions. He did not write an editorial for the paper blaming the police department for permitting a man like that to be on the road when he should have stood in the gutter to let a preacher pass. He did not rush to the village to order an ambulance to pick this wretch up. He did not go to the nearest laboratory to have a blood test taken to find out if perchance he had been infected. Mark adds, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him."

Jesus knew what no religious leader until that time had ever discovered—that life needs something more than good advice. If good advice were enough for mankind Jesus might as well have died when he finished his sermon on the Mount. If merely the preaching of the sermon

had been enough, the cross would have been quite unnecessary. But life needs something more than that. You cannot give men hope and heart by urging them to commit to memory a set of regulatory practices. The world needs something more than a syllogism to save it. Mankind seeks not only the wisdom of a teacher but the touch of a healer. It was not necessary for Jesus to come to earth to give men good advice. The world has always had plenty of that. We need not simply a prophet of righteousness but a lover of our souls. Because He came down from the mountain forever healing the sick, helping the lame and giving sight to the blind, the name of Jesus of Nazereth stands enshrined in the hearts and hopes of men throughout the ages. The glory of Jesus is not in the manifesto of a brilliant idealism, but in the manifestation of a great heart. You will never understand Him until you understand that fact. He linked an argument with an affection, a syllogism with a sympathy, a discussion with a demonstration.

That fact lies at the basis of all miracles of Jesus. Many people these days have great difficulty in understanding these wonders of the Son of God. I do not. Men are apt to say that

they do not need the miracles of Jesus to prove his power—and that is true. We have, however, seemingly forgotten that the miracles of Jesus do not prove His power but they prove His concern. They do not evidence that He has might, but that He has interest. They are so essential, not to verify that He was strong enough but that He was willing enough. "He was moved with compassion and put forth his hand."

* * * *

That simple but unforgettable story answers forever, for all ages, the question men are asking again today: "Does He Stand By?" There are two simple facts which Jesus gives to the world out of this dramatic episode. They are these:

I. Jesus does not deny the reality of pain. He acknowledges that there are desperate forces making for misery. He does not laugh away these grim shadows. Never did he say to anyone that these are only the outgrowths of a diseased imagination. Jesus knew that the hot ploughshare of crises and miseries cut deep furrows in the fields of life. He was always saying to the disciples, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." Never did he promise any disciple that obedience to Him would bring release from

hunger and heartache. There are disparities in life and disillusionments in the world. There was a time when even the Son of God had to go to His Gethsemane and falling upon His knees cry out, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

II. But Jesus did not stop there. With the admission of the fact there came another fact which is just as clear as the ice caps that light up the crags of the Canadian Rockies. It is this second fundamental fact of the Christian religion: Jesus is not unconcerned. He is not an indifferent spectator. "Moved with compassion, He put forth His hand and touched him." He had a heart, and more than that, He identified Himself with the miseries of man. He dragged the cross of the world across His own soul. He could not keep Himself out of the world's misery. He made the welter of the ages His very own. He entered the shadows which haunted men and walked by their side. Jesus identified Himself with the world's travail.

Visiting a friend's home He could have no peace until He healed the aged mother. Riding in an open boat with His comrades He could have no happiness until He had calmed the storm. One midnight it was a Hebrew scholar;

one daybreak it was a foundering ship; one morning it was the daughter of an inconsequential foreign peasant woman; one noon it was the outcast by the well at Sychar; one afternoon it was the feeding of the five thousand on the open fields of Galilee, and at each sunset the door of His home was crowded with those who needed healing and He never turned them away. He joined the gray armies of featureless grief who have in them no beauty that we should desire them, and called them brothers and friends. He was born in Bethlehem in the companionship of hated outcast shepherds. He died on Calvary in the comradeship of criminals. He has always identified Himself with the world's misery. Have you ever thought that in the Lord's Prayer the words, "I" and "My" and "Me" are strangely absent? Not once do those words appear in that prayer. Rather you have: "Our Father," "Forgive Us" and "Lead Us." He identified Himself with the world's travail.

So it has been through all the ages. As surely as the lone pilgrims to Emmaeus met Him on the road and were enheartened by the music of His voice, so along the dusty trails of life's drab hours He walks with men, though unnoticed and

unseen. Now what Jesus of Nazereth was in the days of His flesh, God has been, and will be, throughout all ages. Not Sinai, but Golgotha, is the final revealing of God. Not Moses, but Jesus, speaks His last word to the children of men. Not in law, but in love, does He come to the world. Watch Him as He comes to a bend in the road and the celestial city breaks upon the horizon. Then you hear Him say, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee together as a hen gathereth her chicks, but ye would not." So He still stands today. You may hiss and hate Him; you may kill or crucify Him but He still stands by.

I recall walking with an Oriental through a museum not long ago. In one corridor we came upon a replica of that impressive and marvelous statue of Buddha. He was seated. His eyes were shut. His arms were folded. There was about him the calm of death. My Oriental friend called my attention to this marvelous expression of the God of the Orientals. I could not help but say to him, "But that is not my God." My God does not sit, but stands anxious to succour his children. His eyes are not closed, but open to the needs of the world. His arms are not folded but out-stretched in eternal yearning. He is not

calm in death, but living with a passionate love for His children. Ever since that day when the morning stars sang together the spirit of God has brooded over the face of the waters and will brood unto the end of time till pain and travail are no more.

We are all God's children. Just as a child affects and is affected by the parent, so we affect and are affected by Our Heavenly Father. Is it possible to suppose that the mother who has loved a child into breath and birth and being, whose body is her body and whose flesh is her flesh, has no concern for the child? Can you by any stretch of imagination believe that merely having tossed this little life into the world she is no longer interested in it? Can you say that what happens to him is of no consequence to her? That she lives entirely outside that life and gives it no concern? A thousand times no. When the child suffers, she is in torment. When he bleeds, she is in misery. When he weeps, her eyes are bloodshot, too. When he falls, she is in darkness. When he triumphs, she rejoices. Multiply that by infinity and you will come to understand, though dimly, that God stands by. "A bruised reed He will not break and a smoking flax He will not quench." That is the essence of the

Christian faith to which men cling today as the leper clung to the robes of Jesus and was not rejected.

I was standing one day by a white cot in a hospital. It is a long time ago now, although it seems but as yesterday. I was looking into a face scarred by pain and a body broken and tortured by disease and fever. There was so little I could do or say and there was so little which this sick sufferer would accept. After a little visit I went away and returned the next day as I promised. Then again I stood by the side of that white bed with a friend at my left and a nurse at my right. Before me was a little table with a white napkin over it upon which I had spread the elements of bread and wine, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We shared together the bread that was broken and the wine poured forth. At the end of the brief service a strange calm came to the sufferer. A smile broke through a face scarred by anguish and there was less tossing because once more that sufferer had come to see that in the actual partaking of the bread and wine of the sacrament there had come the conviction that Jesus Christ had identified Himself with her travail. He may not take away pain, remove the misery, or lift the cloud,

but just as sure as the three men in the fiery pits of Babylon saw one walking by their side like unto the Son of Man, so along the bloody trails of life and in the fiery furnace of adversity, He still stands by.

* * * *

But you say to me, "That is all very well but it does not work out that way in life. It is well enough to theorize and romanticize about religion in the quiet calm of this resting place for wearied souls, but in the actual stress and strain of life it is not true. There is no evidence in my life that He stands by." This is not merely romance or poetry. This of what I have been speaking is the most convincing reality of life. What He did centuries ago in that historic episode with the leper, He has done a million times over. Because you draw the shades upon your windows, have you a right to say, "The sun is not shining"? Because you withdraw to your darkened room at night, can you say that the stars do not burn nor moonbeams light up the earth? Because you walk listlessly and carelessly through the garden, can you say that roses have no fragrance?

May I put it in another way? One day you walk to an aviation field where you see a new

airplane and by the side of it the owner and pilot. He is good enough to invite you to join him in his cabin and fly with him like a sea gull through the azure blue. He takes you on a glorious ride and all is well. Then out of kindness he permits you to sit at the controls while he sits by your side. He teaches you the simple rudiments of handling the plane. Your feet are on the clutches and your hand is on the stick. It is a thrilling experience. By and by you feel as if you understand the mechanism and the laws of the plane and have no need of the pilot's advice. You open the door of the cockpit and unceremoniously throw the pilot overboard. All goes well for a little while until you run into fog banks and cross-currents of air. Suddenly your plane goes into tail spins and nose dives. The pilot, seeing your predicament, comes back to offer his assistance, but of course you are too proud to accept that help. Then the inevitable happens. You and your plane fall to the earth a broken mass of tangled wreckage. Can you blame the pilot for what you have brought upon yourself? So it is with life. Life is the invention of God. He meant it to be run by certain laws. He has given you the control of it and has taught you the simple facts of living, but

always sitting by your side to succor in case of distress. Can you hold God responsible, if, growing wearied with his precepts and counsel, you throw Him out of your life and you and civilization are wrecked?

* * * *

Throughout all time He has identified Himself with the world's travail. Much has changed in this world since Jesus came to earth. Many things have greatly altered in the rainfall of twenty centuries. One fact only has not changed. While faces change and conditions alter, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever: tender in His pitying care, eternal in his compassion for the children of men. With outstretched hands He still stands by and we still hear His voice caroling over the hills of time, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." His love still has its ancient charm; His presence still has its old compelling.

I recall an experience during the war. I was in Brest and was asked to address a large company of colored troops on one hot Sunday night. These colored troopers were stevedores unloading the cargoes of ammunition and supplies and motor lorries for the front. Because of the pres-

sure of time these men had worked twenty hours without rest, unloading a transport. It was on that evening after such hours of work that I saw them in the hut. There were perhaps 3,000 of them. I have forgotten much about that service, but one thing I have never forgotten, for it has cut itself into my memory. At the close of the service these strong, care-free stevedores were not at all disposed to go to their barracks to sleep. They wanted to sing the old melodies of their homes. By and by I could see this great, vast group of 3,000 men, many of them with their eyes closed and tears trickling down their cheeks, sway back and forth with their sweated, swarthy bodies in perfect rhythm as they chanted in minor tones the song they had sung on the plantations of their own south country, "Nobody knows the trouble I'se got, nobody knows—but Jesus." Those humble stevedores had a finer philosophy of life, my friends, than the majority of us possess. It constitutes life's supreme need today.

"O love that will not let me go
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

IX

THE ROMANCE

of

THE KINGDOM

THE ROMANCE OF THE KINGDOM

REVELATION 3:5—*"He that overcometh shall be arrayed in white garments; and I will confess him before my father."*

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION is suffering today from a discipleship which has lost faith in its enterprise. The defeatist spirit is abroad among us. The Christian religion has not yet established itself and it is still a minority religion. There is something disquieting about Protestant Christianity in its inability to adjust itself to current life. We sing very loudly about our conquests but often it is only whistling to keep up our courage. Many of us are true to our tasks, never shrinking, never shirking, standing face forward; but it is with the attitude of, "We who are about to die, salute you." The books on religion of today turn on such subjects as "The Waning of Worship," "The Passing of Piety," "The Decay of Devotion," "The Eclipse of Spirituality." The cruel observance of Marcus Aurelius is haunting men today anew, "This too shall pass away." The cynicism which has

drenched the modern world has crippled nothing so severely as religion, and nothing in religion so desperately as it prophets. Here and there you will find a man, bless God, stand unashamed and unafraid, radiant with the dawn and speaking with the voice of a prophet. But such spirits are rare; they are like islands in the sea of indifference, like an oasis in the hot deserts of barrenness. Now and then one hears a voice like that of Coleridge, "O God, how wonderful it is to live"; but more generally men chant the miserere of Renan, "O God, if there be a God, when will life be worth living?"

Nineteen hundred years ago a company of men fear-swept, dread-drenched, haunted by terrific misgivings slink through the narrow winding streets of old Jerusalem to the upper room of a widow's home. There the divine afflatus comes to them and the Holy Ghost falls athwart their lives, and suddenly it transforms this company until their faces become radiant. They laugh at persecution, utterly indifferent to pain or undisturbed by cross bearing, singing the hymnals of hope in their common rendezvous of the catacombs of Rome, and leave two great words which they fling across the pages of the New Testament: Abba—Father, and Maranatha

—Jesus come. How can that transformation be won back? Where is it today?

I do not propose to outline the reasons for this spiritual back-wash for that is not my concern now. It is always nobler to venture than to find fault, to proclaim than to defend. What concerns us rather is how this lost glory can be restored and how can the lambent radiance of the early church fill again the churches of this century? What elements make up the radiance of discipleship and what constitutes the romance of the ministry?

As you think through this question you come back inevitably to three fundamental convictions that make up the romance of the ministry and the radiance of Christian discipleship. They are these:

I. The romance of the Christian ministry lies in the personality of its Founder. I recall one evening last summer in London at the American Embassy. It was after dinner and I was sitting in the spacious library with that distinguished American, my friend, General Charles G. Dawes. A cold London fog chilled the air and made more inviting the warmth and glow playing on the hearth. As we sat there that evening I told him what every one of you would have

told him, the high esteem in which he is held in England, the sense of honor that we feel in his rich service, and the satisfaction that he must feel knowing his work is so well done. With his characteristic and naive gesture, but full of kindness, he raised his hands as if to stop me and then spoke for several minutes, talking rapidly but earnestly of his high regard for and the marvelous ability of the President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. Then turning abruptly to me he said, "Don't you see it is not difficult to be a good ambassador under such a leader?" What more was said that night I do not know and it does not matter. A little while later we shook hands and I said goodbye to the Ambassador. I went out in that cold London fog that summer evening and, walking alone through the lonely paths of Hyde Park, there surged through my soul, as there surges through it again today, this sentence, "It is not difficult to be a good ambassador under such a leader." It is a marvelous tribute of one great man to another. If it is true in figures of national importance how much more true it is in the sphere of religious loyalty!

The distinguishing characteristic which separates Christianity from all other religions lies in

the genius and personality of its founder. Hinduism is devotion to an idea; Mohammedanism is devotion to a code; the Hebraic faith is devotion to a law; Confucianism is devotion to a grave; but Christianity is devotion to a personality. And what a romance that life holds. He was born in a borrowed cradle; He rode to triumph on a borrowed beast; He was buried in a borrowed tomb; He was reared in poverty; He never traveled one hundred miles from home; He invented nothing; He discovered nothing; He constructed nothing, and destroyed nothing. The world at His death was the same as it had been externally at His birth. He made no important contacts. He never had a home of His own; He never had influential friends to plead His cause; He had no army to fight for Him. His friends were among the humblest of earth, six of them coming from one little fishing town of which His own fellow countrymen knew but little. His father was a carpenter who died early, His mother was a humble peasant woman of Galilee. He had four unnamed brothers and some unnamed sisters.

There never lived a man who made such gigantic claims. He guaranteed to rewrite the history of the world, to make a universe without

pain, without panic, without disease, and without sin. He undertook to reconstruct the ideas of Nationalism and racial superiority. He said He would make men rethink life in terms of God. At a moment when the world was falling apart and nations were crumbling in pieces He said He would make the world one when He was lifted up from the earth. He risked His reputation in order to associate with outcasts and publicans. He staked the propagation of His gospel upon a handful of men whom Tacitus called illiterate and ignorant, and when men asked Him how He proposed to carry through His program if these men should fail Him, He only replied, " I have no other plan, I am counting on them." There never lived a world figure who made such gigantic claims and proposed such dramatic changes. Yet before He was thirty-three years of age He had against Him the culture and ecclesiastical prejudices of His World. He died a disgraceful death and when the Roman soldiers, according to the custom of the times, began to throw dice upon a flat stone before His cross to gamble for His possessions, He only left them a little cloak which His mother had woven for Him in the uplands of Galilee. When He died deserted by

His disciples it seemed as if His very name would become obliterated for all time.

That was nineteen hundred years ago. Today like bells of hope resonant, harmonious, clear, the words of the soul's Saviour ring over land and sea. Sixty generations ago He walked this very earth, slept under stars that shine upon us, wondered at the glory of daybreak before which we too stand reverently. You may as well try to untwist moonbeams that fall with a mellow glow upon fields and forests as to suppose you can untwist the name and the memory of the Son of God from the heart of the ages. After twenty centuries that simple, artless story of His birth, life and ressurection is read by more people than any other story of any other leader for it has been interpreted and written in over three hundred languages. He made the dull gray of human life shine through with a prismatic brilliancy of the glory of God. Before Him all deep questions and dark surmises slink away. No argument against the sun can obliterate it from the sky and no mole-eyed skepticism can wash from the memory of man the beauty of His glorious life. Tissot paints Him with the face of an Arab, Titian gives Him the outline of an Italian, Murillo portrays Him as a son of Spain, while

Rubens gives Him the physiognomy of a Flanders peasant. And yet we strangely recognize Him in all these settings. In Athens and in Antioch, in Rome and in Moscow, in Constantinople and in Washington, He is the same; and as the rising and waning moon draws to its heaving breast the tides of the sea in ebb and flow so around the name of Jesus of Nazareth innumerable multitudes bow to confess Him their Lord and Master. Browning spoke the truth when he said, "That face far from vanishes, grows." The voice of humanity speaks in the simple lines:

"From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again."

He is the only character in history who holds His footing in innocence. He is the only figure in time whom you cannot place. He is the only religious leader whom the ages cannot dim. He is the only founder of a faith who satisfies the hope of the ages. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, in the face of Jesus Christ. The romance of the Christian ministry lies in the personality of its founder and the radiance of discipleship of our faith is the glory of Jesus.

II. The romance of the Christian religion lies in the glory of its fellowship. Our ministry is linked to a great comradeship.

When they laid Jesus of Nazareth in the borrowed tomb men thought it was the end of His life. No one believed in His resurrection. The women came with ointment and clean linen in which to wrap His body. If they had believed in His resurrection they would have brought Him food and crowns. Then something happened. Out of the sepulchral gloom of the Garden of the Arimathean, Jesus of Nazareth arose and the miracle begins. In the upper room in Jerusalem the unction of the Holy Ghost comes upon a handful of disciples. They go out everywhere to preach the story of their Christ. Undisturbed by passion and undistracted by the hate of the world they preached the story in cities and in synagogues, upon the sea and in open country, in the home of a peasant, and on the hilltops of the philosophers. Through the reigns of seven persecuting emperors they carry on without fear or regret. And within three hundred years these men of the upper room, transformed by the radiant presence of the Holy Ghost, carry their gospel fifteen hundred miles east and west and a thousand

miles north and south until seven million are brought into the Church, saved by the blood of the Lamb.

But it was not without price. All of the disciples of Jesus but one died an unnatural death. Upon the beetling cliffs of Patmos John saw the storms of passion which would drench them and spoke of them, "These are they that have passed through great tribulation and their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb." During the World War a group of English correspondents desired to see the soldiers of France in action at the front. When the French military escort had taken them up and down the gruesome lines and one part of the front still remained to be seen he turned to them and said, "Gentlemen, the French government can confer no higher honor upon its guests then to take them to Verdun; but the French government cannot guarantee to bring you back." So it was with this little company which had committed themselves to the enterprise of Jesus with a cross that turned not back. Nero dipped their bodies in caldrons of hot pitch and sent them walking at night aflame like living torches through his gardens. They were indeed.

"Comrades of the souls supreme,
The Conscripts of a mighty dream;
Brave souls that took the perilous trail,
And felt the vision could not fail."

They did not go about pulverizing atheism or skepticism but rather did they declare, "That which we have seen and that which we have heard." They climbed the highest hill, crossed the blackest sea, and penetrated the deepest forests with a gospel of experience. They did not make it; it was not their invention but it was given to them of God and so they spake. They did not link religion to laws but to life; not to creed but to character; not to dogma but to experience; not to discussions but to demonstrations. They were not held together by a common creed or a common book or a common organization or a common ritual; they were bound one to the other by a common loyalty and love to Jesus Christ. What a blessed fellowship it is to which the Christian disciple links his life. Surely the romance of religion lies in the glory of its fellowship.

Then there came a day of change. When Julian the Apostate fell upon the battlefield crying, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered," thereby establishing Christianity as the re-

ligion of the state after the decree of Constantine, the disciples of Jesus were no longer hated but haloed, no longer crucified but crowned. Instead of a faith that men despised it became a faith that men were compelled to accept and the religion of Jesus once lampooned now becomes honored. Then something happened which always happens in the history of every movement. It is hard to ride the crest of a wave. When people have nothing to fight against they go fighting one another. So it was in the Church and the era of supremacy ends in a schism and for the first time, but regrettably not the last, the comradeship of Jesus is divided into two distinct groups: The Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic, the Church of the East and the Church of the West.

The centuries pass and there came to Europe that indescribable experience called the Dark Ages. Civilization was swept from its moorings. Indeed it was worse than that, paganism had smothered culture. It was like imposing the law of the jungle upon a home for the aged and like forcing the rule of the ghetto on a university. The Goths and Visigoths under Alaric crossed the Danube one million strong in one of the greatest racial movements of all times. Two hundred

years later the Huns, under Atilla, follow until they stand at the very gates of Rome with an army of seven hundred thousand men. Civilization, culture, art were all swept away and it seemed as if the world had turned in on itself. But the fellowship of Jesus does not fail in its enterprise. Undaunted by brutal savagery and undisturbed by fearful suffering they carry the faith of their fathers into the very heart of pagan supremacy. They build monasteries on sun-crowned hills to save the scraps of civilization and the literature of the ages. Ulfilas follows the Danube through the Balkans into Russia until Valdimir, the Russian prince, is won to the cross and through his leadership brings the great Slavic people under the dominant influence of Jesus Christ through the establishment of the Greek Church. Boniface goes into the deep interior of northern Germany and standing one day under a tree dedicated by the tribe to the worship of their gods, told again the simple story of the crucifixion of Jesus. It so moved these heathen hearts that the leader of the tribe came forward saying, as he lifted his battle-axe above his head, "They never would have killed Him had I been there"; and so was the Teuton country won to the cross. Augustine with a com-

pany of followers sails the high sea until he tramps over the soil of Kent County to Canterbury where he set up the faith of our fathers and began the winning of England to the dominant supremacy of Jesus of Nazareth. What a glorious company it is and what a romance lies in the fact that our lives are linked to such spirits.

As the Church becomes strong its own success is threatened. Power again leads to its undoing and its very success is a menace. Compromising in order to win, there crept into the Church pagan customs, heathen practices and external ceremonials which rob it of its heart and life. Menaced by its own peril there arose no voices to protest, until Peter Waldo, a retired merchant, cries out against the sins of the clergy; Wickliffe lifts his voice in protest against a heartless and formal faith; and John Hus goes to his death warning the Church of its danger. It seemed, however, of no avail. Then one day a German student gave a party to a group of his fellow students and teachers in a German university and after much feasting and singing rose in their midst and said, "Today you see me, tomorrow you will see me no more,"—and Martin Luther leaves his comrades, enters a monastery

the next morning, fights for his soul through endless penances, mortifications, fasting, a pilgrimage to Rome until at last light breaks upon his darkness and he nails his ninety-five theses on All Saints Day to the door of his cathedral Church and calls out to the world, "The just shall live by faith," and the Protestant Reformation is born. It is common today to say it was all a mistake; if only the quarrel might have been postponed to a later age the Reformation would never have come. My friends, the Reformation was not a mistake or a tragedy, it was inevitable and necessary. Those early comrades of our faith said, "Beautiful though the cup may be, however esthetic may be the symbol or artistic the picture it means nothing if the heart has gone out of it." They preferred to drink spring water out of a rusted dipper than to drink vinegar out of a golden chalice. They would rather worship God in sincerity and in truth on the bleak heather-swept hills of Scotland with full loyalty than to bow before golden altars and purple-robed priests in a worship without soul.

In moments of crisis when the resources of men shrivel the resources of God are always unfolded. The Protestant Reformation was a ground-swell of discontent but there were no

leaders to lead them to the light. In that day God put his hand upon a little lad in France who was preparing for the priesthood. His conscience would not permit him to tarry longer under the vow and he left to study law at a university. There the light broke upon him which made his life so radiant that he was compelled to flee to another land for refuge and in that hour John Calvin preached in a little Church in old Geneva the gospel of the Reformation. One summer Sunday morning there came into that Church a wistful but disheartened young man in whose soul there played the fire of the Reformation leaders. He was deeply moved by that sermon of John Calvin and stayed to hear many others until a friendship was established between these two like the friendship of a teacher for a disciple. Then one day when God's hour had struck, the disciple went out to his own kith and kin and John Knox, with the scars of the galley slave upon his wrists and ankles, preaches the unsearchable messages of Jesus in the highlands of Scotland and Presbyterianism is born.

The years roll by and upon New England's broken coast a little company of devout men set up a government after their own religious con-

victions and Puritanism is planted in America. It is an impressive fact that two-thirds of the ministers of the Puritan Church were Presbyterians. Then a request came to the New England colony from a group of leaders of the Church in Scotland to have assigned to them some area of land where they might come to settle and maintain unmolested the faith of their fathers. The request is granted, the pilgrimage began but the ship which carried them across the sea is caught in a terrific storm, almost founders, and turns back. But it only postponed the coming of that comradeship to the American shore and years later one Francis Makemie on the shores of the sea not far from here gathered together little groups of Christians and established Presbyterianism on the Continent. Those little companies grew rapidly and spread through various portions of the occupied lands until you come to the significant and historic fact that the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church met in the same month of the same year as the meeting of the Continental Congress. So always Presbyterianism links hands with freedom and Calvinism synchronizes with democracy. When the government was finally established in a Federal City and brought as

clerks a company of Scotch-Irish from the city of Philadelphia to Washington their first act on Sunday morning was to meet in the corridor of the old Treasury Building and sing the sabbatic hymns of their fathers, and out of that little meeting there was born a Church which is the mother Church of Presbyterianism in Washington City, where later Abraham Lincoln came to worship and to pray, and where many leaders of the land have found new hope and heart for their tasks, a Church which now I have the honor to serve.

What a romance it is. A little company of men in the upper room of a widow's home has become a great multitude numbering today one-third of the population of the modern world and upon that Church the sun never sets. Now and then smug cynics would have you believe that that comradeship has run its course and that the Church will end in failure. My friends, that Church will never fail until the wings of hope lie folded upon the breast of a dead God. It shall carry on its enterprise of redemption until the last stray prodigal has been carried by the boatman with the silver oars across the river which has no bridge into the presence of the

Saviour of the world and eternal dawn stretches its tents of gold upon fields of ivory.

"I know not where thy isles shall lift,
Or on what seas shall be thy fate;
I only know it shall be high,
I only know it shall be great."

From the day of John and Paul who found in Christ the loadstone of their hopes and dreams through the days of Chrysostom and Athanasius who stood out against the lustful wickedness of their times through Luther, Calvin and Knox who brought that fellowship back to the heart of the gospel up to the present the odyssey of the divine redemption has been preached by the disciples of Jesus, and shall be preached unto the end of time when nations and worlds shall cast their crowns before Him whose right it is to rule and reign the hearts of men. The romance of the Christian ministry lies in the glory of its fellowship.

III. The romance of the Christian ministry lies in the glory of an unfailing gospel. Jesus of Nazareth is the redeemer of the world. His gospel is a gospel of reconciliation. Whatever else men may think of Him, He is never understood until they see Him as a Saviour. We

speak of Christ as a teacher and so He was; but those early disciples said little about it. We call Him a philanthropist and so He was; but that was not Paul's gospel. He is hailed today as the great reformer and truly so He was, but the New Testament is not concerned about that. You do not know Him or the gospel which His disciples preached until you turn back the pages of the Book and you hear again John saying to the multitudes, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." That gospel is so supremely romantic because it is world-wide, sin-deep, and cross-high. It is world-wide because it does not divide men in races or in nations, but holds the whole world together. It is sin-deep because there is no despair over sin so dark which it cannot wash away and no wrong so ugly which it cannot cleanse. It is cross-high because only through the way of sacrifice and suffering can it be told to the ages.

It is a wonderful thing to take a piece of steel and gold and make with them a watch that keeps time with the sun. It is a wonderful thing to take some pigments, a brush and a bit of canvas and stretch on it a Millet's "Angelus." It is a wonderful thing to take a bit of glue, a few strings and a pine board and make an instrument

that can sob out a Beethoven's "Unfinished Symphony" or a Palestrina's "Ave Maria." But what can be more wonderful and what has more romance in it than to tell a story that lifts men out of the dregs, transforms their lives, translates their influence, and glorifies their names. That is the romance and the radiance which crowds about Christian discipleship. To the people of London a fog was only a fog that interfered with their work and was harmful to daily life. Then one day an American saw a London fog. For him it transformed the chimney pots of the houses into glorious Campanilles; it reconstructed warehouses into beautiful palaces and it made the streets of London seem like streets of gold hanging on the heavens. So has the romance of the Christian disciple taken the sordid, dark things of life and made them glorious with a new radiance and splendor. Before such a gospel how can men lose hope, or dare to lose heart? Once more the Christ of the ages calls us to new loyalties.

When Phillip Brooks was elevated to the Bishopric the whole city of Boston extended to him congratulations upon the deserving honor. Among the many letters that came to him there was one which Phillip Brooks valued above all

others. It was from a tailor who worked in his little shop near the Church which Phillip Brooks made famous throughout the world and this was the letter:

"Dear Dr. Brooks: I am a tailor in a little shop near your Church. Whenever I have the opportunity I always go to hear you preach. Each time I hear you preach I seem to forget all about you, for you make me think of God." I had rather carry the memory and message of that tribute to Kingdom Come than all the bags of gold you can drag through the streets of your city. There lies the radiance of discipleship and the romance of our ministry.

"When the last day is ended,
And the nights are through;
When the sun lies buried
In a field of blue;
When the stars have lost their luster,
And the seas no longer fret;
When the winds have lost their cunning
And the storms forget;
When the last lip is palsied,
And the last long prayer is said,
God will reign immortal,
Though the worlds lie dead."

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